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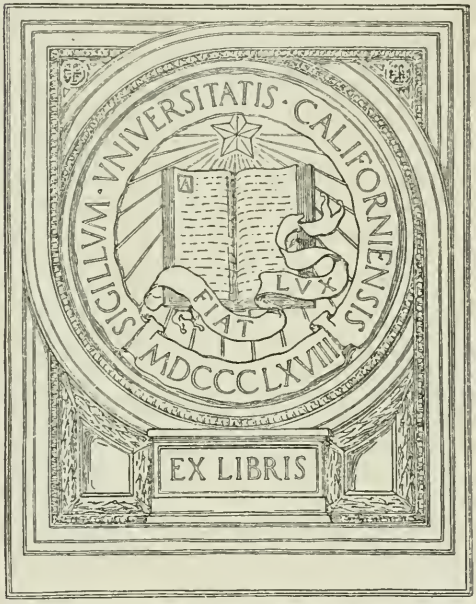

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THE WORKS AND LIFE OF WALTER BAGEHOT

Vol. I.

By Mrs. RUSSELL BARRINGTON.

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THE WORKS AND LIFE

OF

WALTER BAGEHOT

EDITED BY

MRS. RUSSELL BARRINGTON

THE WORKS IN NINE VOLUMES
THE LIFE IN ONE VOLUME
VOL. I. OF THE WORKS

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PREFACE

UNTIL now the only uniform edition of Walter Bagehot's writings in existence, was one published in America in 1889 by *The Traveller's Insurance Company, Hartford, Conn.*, "as a souvenir of itself"—to quote from its advertisement. This work was compiled and edited with exceptional care and completeness by Mr. Forrest Morgan, at considerable personal sacrifice. His exhaustive notes have been used with advantage in subsequent issues of the separate works published in England, and also in the preparation of the present uniform edition. A debt of gratitude is clearly owing to Mr. Forrest Morgan from all those interested in the study of Walter Bagehot's writings.

The American uniform edition comprised the writings previously selected by Mr. Hutton for republication. To these are now added the first two articles written by Bagehot which appeared in the *Prospective Review* in 1848, namely "The Currency Monopoly" and "Principles of Political Economy"; "The Monetary Crisis," *National Review*, January, 1858; "The American Constitution," *National Review*, October, 1861; "Matthew Arnold on the London University," *Fortnightly Review*, June, 1868; "Senior's Journals," *Fortnightly Review*, August, 1871; "Count your Enemies and Economise your Expenditure," a pamphlet written during a two days' visit to Bognor in the spring of 1862; seventeen articles

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on "The Depreciation of Silver," written for *The Economist* in 1876;[1] and three short early essays printed for the first time as examples of Bagehot's writings in early youth: "Essay on the Comparative Advantages of the Study of Ancient and Modern Languages," written at the age of sixteen; "Thoughts on Democracy," and "Essay on the Character of Mirabeau and his Influence on his Age." The most important matter republished for the first time will be found in the ninth volume, which contains articles reprinted from *The Economist*, *The Saturday Review*, and one article from *The Spectator*. Bagehot wrote, as a rule, at least two articles each week for *The Economist* during the last eighteen years of his life, during the period therefore when his mind was fully matured and while he was living in the centre of all that was best in the political and intellectual interests of his time. Hence these articles contain many utterances quite as valuable as any to be found in his more deliberate writings. All are interesting and written in Bagehot's unmistakable style, a style intrinsically his own, wherewith he contrives to make dry subjects lively, intricate questions simple, and every matter vital with a sense of reality. Out of the many hundred articles Bagehot wrote while directing *The Economist*, a selection had to be made for re-publication. In making this selection the main object has been to choose those whose subjects are likely to retain a permanent interest for the general public. I am greatly indebted to Sir William Robertson Nicoll for his most kind and able assistance in making this choice.

Walter Bagehot wrote on many subjects. In his case, perhaps more even than in that of other great

[1] Bagehot had 2,000 copies of these printed in pamphlet form, with Preface and Appendix by himself. The 2,000 copies were all sold at the time and till now the articles have not been reprinted.

authors, it is desirable to collect all his writings in one edition ; to have within easy reach together with "the English Constitution," "Physics and Politics," "Lombard Street" and the "Economic Studies," essays such as "Hartley Coleridge," "Béranger," "Thomas Babington Macaulay," "Bishop Butler". The great versatility which characterised Bagehot's mind during the whole period of his life, can only be fully gauged, the essential trend of his creeds only rightly grasped by a study of his works as a whole. Below the play of his frolicsome humour, below the stability of his intellectual powers, below the wealth of his imagination, lay natural instincts which welded his gifts into the very individual form in which they found expression. "Deep under the surface of the intellect lies the stratum of the passions, of the intense, peculiar, simple impulses which constitute the heart of man ; there is the eager essence, the primitive, desiring being,"[1] and in this primitive, desiring being is found the initiative impulse which directed all else in Walter Bagehot.

At the age of twenty-one he wrote the essay on John Stuart Mill's "Principles of Political Economy" wherein he classes Mill as belonging to "an Aristotelic, or unspiritual order of great thinkers. The light of his intellect is exactly what Bacon calls 'dry light' ; it is 'unsteeped in the humours of the affections' ; it disregards what Butler calls the 'presages of Conscience' and attends only to the senses and the inductive intellect. The extreme opposite to this school of thinkers is to be found in the school of Plato, and Butler and Kant, who practically make the conscience the ultimate basis of all certainty from whose principles it may be deduced that the ground for trusting our other

[1] "Thomas Babington Macaulay," *National Review*, Jan., 1856.

faculties is the duty revealed by conscience, of trusting those of them essential to the performance of the task assigned by God to Man—thinkers, in short, whose peculiar function it is to establish in the minds of thoughtful persons that primitive theology which is the necessary basis of all positive Revelation."

These, his own words, describe the school of thinkers to which Bagehot himself belonged—the school of Plato, Butler and Kant. The work that had fallen to him in life, owing to family circumstances, and also as that which satisfied "the impulse to busy ourselves with the affairs of men"—an impulse very strongly possessed by Bagehot—was not of a nature to disclose to the outer world the essential and most important characteristics of his nature. But from his writings these can be traced, more especially when his writings are taken as a whole. Through these, whatever might be the subject on which he wrote, runs the same connecting link, one which in these days it is especially important to discern. "The light of his intellect" was not "dry light, unsteeped in the humours of the affections," but was that light which practically makes "the conscience the ultimate basis of all certainty," the true wisdom which looks "unto the Rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole whence ye are digged."

The original intention in arranging Walter Bagehot's works in this uniform edition was to place the writings in chronological order. It was not, however, found possible to carry out this intention in every instance. Eight volumes of the works had already been printed before it was contemplated that a life of Walter Bagehot should be written as a precursor to the issue of this edition.[1] While collecting material for this life, I came across several articles which had never been reprinted.

[1] The *Life of Walter Bagehot* forms the tenth volume of this edition.

These obviously were entitled to find a place in any edition which professed to be a complete collection of Walter Bagehot's works. But, as far as was found possible under these circumstances, the new matter has been inserted so as to carry out the original idea of a chronological sequence.

E. I. B.

HERD'S HILL.

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MEMOIR

BY RICHARD HOLT HUTTON.

It is inevitable, I suppose, that the world should judge of a man chiefly by what it has gained in him, and lost by his death, even though a very little reflection might sometimes show that the special qualities which made him so useful to the world implied others of a yet higher order, in which, to those who knew him well, these more conspicuous characteristics must have been well-nigh merged. And while, of course, it has given me great pleasure, as it must have given pleasure to all Bagehot's friends, to hear the Chancellor of the Exchequer's evidently genuine tribute to his financial sagacity in the Budget speech of 1877, and Lord Granville's eloquent acknowledgments of the value of Bagehot's political counsels as Editor of the *Economist*, in the speech delivered at the London University on May 9, 1877, I have sometimes felt somewhat unreasonably vexed that those who appreciated so well what I may almost call the smallest part of him, appeared to know so little of the essence of him,—of the high-spirited, buoyant, subtle, speculative nature in which the imaginative qualities were even more remarkable than the judgment, and were, indeed, at the root of all that was strongest in the judgment,—of the gay and dashing humour which was the life of every conversation in which he joined,—and of the visionary nature to which the commonest things often seemed the most marvellous, and the marvellous things the most intrinsically probable. To those who hear of Bagehot only as an original political economist and a lucid political thinker, a curiously false image of him must be suggested. If they are among the multitude misled by Carlyle, who regard all political econo-

mists as "the dreary professors of a dismal science," they will probably conjure up an arid disquisitionist on value and cost of production; and even if assured of Bagehot's imaginative power, they may perhaps only understand by the expression, that capacity for feverish preoccupation which makes the mention of "Peel's Act" summon up to the faces of certain fanatics a hectic glow, or the rumour of paper currencies blanch others with the pallor of true passion. The truth, however, is that the best qualities which Bagehot had, both as economist and as politician, were of a kind which the majority of economists and politicians do not specially possess. I do not mean that it was in any way an accident that he was an original thinker in either sphere; far from it. But I do think that what he brought to political and economical science, he brought in some sense from *outside* their normal range,—that the man of business and the financier in him fell within such sharp and well-defined limits, that he knew better than most of his class where their special weakness lay, and where their special functions ended. This, at all events, I am quite sure of, that so far as his judgment was sounder than other men's—and on many subjects it was much sounder—it was so not in spite of, but in consequence of, the excursive imagination and vivid humour which are so often accused of betraying otherwise sober minds into dangerous aberrations. In him both lucidity and caution were directly traceable to the force of his imagination.

Walter Bagehot was born at Langport on February 3, 1826. Langport is an old-fashioned little town in the centre of Somersetshire, which in early days returned two members to Parliament, until the burgesses petitioned Edward I. to relieve them of the expense of paying their members,—a quaint piece of economy of which Bagehot frequently made humorous boast. The town is still a close corporation, and calls its mayor by the old Saxon name of Portreeve, and Bagehot himself became its Deputy-Recorder, as well as a Magistrate for the County. Situated at the point where the river Parret ceases to be navigable, Langport has always been a centre of trade; and here in the last century Mr. Samuel Stuckey founded the

Somersetshire Bank, which has since spread over the entire county, and is now the largest private bank of issue in England. Bagehot was the only surviving child of Mr. Thomas Watson Bagehot, who was for thirty years Managing Director and Vice-Chairman of Stuckey's Banking Company, and was, as Bagehot was fond of recalling, before he resigned that position, the oldest joint-stock banker in the United Kingdom. Bagehot succeeded his father as Vice-Chairman of the Bank, when the latter retired in his old age. His mother, a Miss Stuckey, was a niece of Mr. Samuel Stuckey, the founder of the Banking Company, and was a very pretty and lively woman, who had, by her previous marriage with a son of Dr. Estlin of Bristol, been brought at an early age into an intellectual atmosphere by which she had greatly profited. There is no doubt that Bagehot was greatly indebted to the constant and careful sympathy in all his studies that both she and his father gave him, as well as to a very studious disposition, for his future success. Dr. Prichard, the well-known ethnologist, was her brother-in-law, and her son's marked taste for science was first awakened in Dr. Prichard's house in Park Row, where Bagehot often spent his half-holidays while he was a schoolboy in Bristol. To Dr. Prichard's *Races of Man* may, indeed, be first traced that keen interest in the speculative side of ethnological research, the results of which are best seen in Bagehot's book on *Physics and Politics*.

I first met Bagehot at University College, London, when we were neither of us over seventeen. I was struck by the questions put by a lad with large dark eyes and florid complexion to the late Professor De Morgan, who was lecturing to us, as his custom was, on the great difficulties involved in what we thought we all understood perfectly—such, for example, as the meaning of 0, of negative quantities, or the grounds of probable expectation. Bagehot's questions showed that he had both read and thought more on these subjects than most of us, and I was eager to make his acquaintance, which soon ripened into an intimate friendship, in which there was never any intermission between that time and his death. Some will regret that Bagehot did not go to Oxford; the

reason being that his father, who was a Unitarian, objected on principle to all doctrinal tests, and would never have permitted a son of his to go to either of the older Universities while those tests were required of the undergraduates. And I am not at all sure that University College, London, was not at that time a much more awakening place of education for young men than almost any Oxford college. Bagehot himself, I suspect, thought so. Fifteen years later he wrote, in his essay on Shelley: "A distinguished pupil of the University of Oxford once observed to us, 'The use of the University of Oxford is that no one can over-read himself there. The appetite for knowledge is repressed.'" And whatever may have been defective in University College, London—and no doubt much was defective—nothing of the kind could have been said of it when we were students there. Indeed, in those years London was a place with plenty of intellectual stimulus in it for young men, while in University College itself there was quite enough vivacious and original teaching to make that stimulus available to the full. It is sometimes said that it needs the quiet of a country town remote from the capital to foster the love of genuine study in young men. But of this, at least, I am sure, that Gower Street, and Oxford Street, and the New Road, and the dreary chain of squares from Euston to Bloomsbury, were the scenes of discussions as eager and as abstract as ever were the sedate cloisters or the flowery river-meadows of Cambridge or Oxford. Once, I remember, in the vehemence of our argument as to whether the so-called logical principle of identity (A is A) were entitled to rank as "a law of thought" or only as a postulate of language, Bagehot and I wandered up and down Regent Street for something like two hours in the vain attempt to find Oxford Street:—

> "And yet what days were those, Parmenides,
> When we were young, when we could number friends
> In all the Italian cities like ourselves,
> When with elated hearts we joined your train,
> Ye sun-born virgins, on the road of truth!
> Then we could still enjoy, then neither thought
> Nor outward things were closed and dead to us,

> But we received the shock of mighty thoughts
> On single minds with a pure natural joy ;
> And if the sacred load oppressed our brain,
> We had the power to feel the pressure eased,
> The brow unbound, the thoughts flow free again
> In the delightful commerce of the world." [1]

Bagehot has himself described, evidently from his own experience, the kind of life we lived in those days, in an article on Oxford Reform: "So, too, in youth, the real plastic energy is not in tutors, or lectures, or in books 'got up,' but in Wordsworth and Shelley, in the books that all read because all like; in what all talk of because all are interested; in the argumentative walk or disputatious lounge; in the impact of young thought upon young thought, of fresh thought on fresh thought, of hot thought on hot thought; in mirth and refutation, in ridicule and laughter; for these are the free play of the natural mind, and these cannot be got without a college".[2]

The late Professor Sewell, when asked to give his pupils some clear conception of the old Greek Sophists, is said to have replied that he could not do this better than by referring them to the Professors of University College, London. I do not think there was much force in the sarcasm, for though Professor T. Hewitt Key, whose restless and ingenious mind led him many a wild dance after etymological Will-o'-the-wisps —I remember, for instance, his cheerfully accepting the suggestion that "better" and "bad" (*melior* and *malus*) came from the same root, and accounting for it by the probable disposition of hostile tribes to call everything bad which their enemies called good, and everything good which their enemies called bad—may have had in him much of the brilliance, and something also, perhaps, of the flightiness, of the old sophist, it would be hard to imagine men more severe in exposing pretentious conceits and dispelling dreams of theoretic omniscience, than Professors De Morgan, Malden, and Long. De Morgan, who at that time was in the midst of his controversy on formal logic with Sir William Hamilton, was, indeed, char-

[1] Matthew Arnold.

[2] *Prospective Review*, No. 31, for August, 1852. Reprinted in this work, vol. i., p. 138.

acterised by the great Edinburgh metaphysician as "profound in mathematics, curious in logic, but wholly deficient in architectonic power"; yet, for all that, his lectures on the Theory of Limits were a far better logical discipline for young men than Sir William Hamilton's on the Law of the Unconditioned or the Quantification of the Predicate. Professor Malden contrived to imbue us with a love of that fastidious taste and that exquisite nicety in treating questions of scholarship, which has, perhaps, been more needed and less cultivated in Gower Street than any other of the higher elements of a college education; while Professor Long's caustic irony, accurate and almost ostentatiously dry learning, and profoundly stoical temperament, were as antithetic to the temper of the sophist as human qualities could possibly be.

The time of our college life was pretty nearly contemporaneous with the life of the Anti-Corn-Law League and the great agitation in favour of Free-trade. To us this was useful rather from the general impulse it gave to political discussion, and the literary curiosity it excited in us as to the secret of true eloquence, than because it anticipated in any considerable degree the later acquired taste for economical science. Bagehot and I seldom missed an opportunity of hearing together the matchless practical disquisitions of Mr. Cobden—lucid and homely, yet glowing with intense conviction,—the profound passion and careless, though artistic, scorn of Mr. Bright, and the artificial and elaborately ornate periods, and witty, though somewhat *ad captandum*, epigrams of Mr. W. J. Fox (afterwards M.P. for Oldham). Indeed, we scoured London together to hear any kind of oratory that had gained a reputation of its own, and compared all we heard with the declamation of Burke and the rhetoric of Macaulay, many of whose later essays came out and were eagerly discussed by us while we were together at college. In our conversations on these essays, I remember that I always bitterly attacked, while Bagehot moderately defended, the glorification of compromise which marks all Macaulay's writings. Even in early youth Bagehot had much of that "animated moderation" which he praises so highly in his latest work. He was a voracious reader, especi-

ally of history, and had a far truer appreciation of historical conditions than most young thinkers; indeed, the broad historical sense which characterised him from first to last, made him more alive than ordinary students to the urgency of circumstance, and far less disposed to indulge in abstract moral criticism from a modern point of view. On theology, as on all other subjects, Bagehot was at this time more conservative than myself, he sharing his mother's orthodoxy, and I at that time accepting heartily the Unitarianism of my own people. Theology was, however, I think, the only subject on which, in later life, we, to some degree at least, exchanged places, though he never at any time, however doubtful he may have become on some of the cardinal issues of historical Christianity, accepted the Unitarian position. Indeed, within the last two or three years of his life, he spoke on one occasion of the Trinitarian doctrine as probably the best account which human reason could render of the mystery of the self-existent mind.

In those early days Bagehot's manner was often supercilious. We used to attack him for his intellectual arrogance—his ὕβρις we called it, in our college slang—a quality which I believe was not really in him, though he had then much of its external appearance. Nevertheless his genuine contempt for what was intellectually feeble was not accompanied by an even adequate appreciation of his own powers. At college, however, his satirical "Hear, hear," was a formidable sound in the debating society, and one which took the heart out of many a younger speaker; and the ironical "How much?" with which in conversation he would meet an over-eloquent expression, was always of a nature to reduce a man, as the mathematical phrase goes, to his "lowest terms". In maturer life he became much gentler and mellower, and often even delicately considerate for others; but his inner scorn for ineffectual thought remained, in some degree, though it was very reticently expressed, to the last. For instance, I remember his attacking me for my mildness in criticising a book which, though it professed to rest on a basis of clear thought, really missed all its points. "There is a pale, whitey-brown substance," he wrote to me, "in the man's books, which people who don't think take for

thought, but it isn't;" and he upbraided me much for not saying plainly that the man was a muff. In his youth this scorn for anything like the vain beating of the wings in the attempt to think, was at its maximum. It was increased, I think, by that which was one of his greatest qualities, his remarkable "detachment" of mind—in other words, his comparative inaccessibility to the contagion of blind sympathy. Most men, more or less unconsciously, shrink from even *thinking* what they feel to be out of sympathy with the feelings of their neighbours, unless under some strong incentive to do so; and in this way the sources of much true and important criticism are dried up, through the mere diffusion and ascendency of conventional but sincere habits of social judgment. And no doubt for the greater number of us this is much the best. We are worth more for the purpose of constituting and strengthening the cohesive power of the social bond, than we should ever be worth for the purpose of criticising feebly—and with little effect, perhaps, except the disorganising effect of seeming ill-nature—the various incompetences and miscarriages of our neighbours' intelligence. But Bagehot's intellect was always far too powerful and original to render him available for the function of mere social cement; and full as he was of genuine kindness and hearty personal affections, he certainly had not in any high degree that sensitive instinct as to what others would feel, which so often shapes even the thoughts of men, and still oftener their speech, into mild and complaisant, but unmeaning and unfruitful, forms.

Thus it has been said that in his very amusing article on Crabb Robinson, published in the *Fortnightly Review* for August, 1869, he was more than a little rough in his delineation of that quaint old friend of our earlier days. And certainly there is something of the naturalist's realistic manner of describing the habits of a new species, in the paper, though there is not a grain of malice or even depreciatory bias in it, and though there is a very sincere regard manifested throughout. But that essay will illustrate admirably what I mean by saying that Bagehot's detachment of mind, and the deficiency in him of any aptitude for playing the part of mere

social cement, tended to give the impression of an intellectual arrogance which—certainly in the sense of self-esteem or self-assertion—did not in the least belong to him. In the essay I have just mentioned he describes how Crabb Robinson when he gave his somewhat famous breakfast-parties, used to forget to make the tea, then lost his keys, then told a long story about a bust of Wieland, during the extreme agony of his guests' appetites, and finally, perhaps, withheld the cup of tea he had at last poured out, while he regaled them with a poem of Wordsworth's or a diatribe against Hazlitt. And Bagehot adds: "The more astute of his guests used to breakfast before they came, and then there was much interest in seeing a steady literary man, who did not understand the region, in agonies at having to hear three stories before he got his tea, one again between his milk and his sugar, another between his butter and his toast, and additional zest in making a stealthy inquiry that was sure to intercept the coming delicacies by bringing on Schiller and Goethe". The only "astute" person referred to was, I imagine, Bagehot himself, who confessed to me, much to my amusement, that this was always his own precaution before one of Crabb Robinson's breakfasts. I doubt if anybody else ever thought of it. It was very characteristic in him that he should have not only noticed—for that, of course, any one might do—this weak element in Crabb Robinson's breakfasts, but should have kept it so distinctly before his mind as to make it the centre, as it were, of a policy, and the opportunity of a mischievous stratagem to try the patience of others. It showed how much of the social naturalist there was in him. If any race of animals could understand a naturalist's account of their ways and habits, and of the devices he adopted to get those ways and habits more amusingly or instructively displayed before him, no doubt they would think that he was a cynic; and it was this intellectual detachment, as of a social naturalist, from the society in which he moved, which made Bagehot's remarks often seem somewhat harsh, when, in fact, they were animated not only by no suspicion of malice, but by the most cordial and earnest friendliness. Owing to this separateness of mind, he described more strongly and distinctly

traits which, when delineated by a friend, we expect to find painted in the softened manner of one who is half disposed to imitate or adopt them.

Yet, though I have used the word "naturalist" to denote the keen and solitary observation with which Bagehot watched society, no word describes him worse, if we attribute to it any of that coldness and stillness of curiosity which we are apt to associate with scientific vigilance. Especially in his youth, buoyancy, vivacity, velocity of thought, were of the essence of the impression which he made. He had high spirits and great capacities for enjoyment, great sympathies indeed with the old English Cavalier. In his Essay on Macaulay he paints that character with profound sympathy :—

"What historian, indeed," he says, "has ever estimated the Cavalier character? There is Clarendon, the grave, rhetorical, decorous lawyer —piling words, congealing arguments—very stately, a little grim. There is Hume, the Scotch metaphysician, who has made out the best case for such people as never were, for a Charles who never died, for a Strafford who could never have been attainted, a saving, calculating North-countryman, fat, impassive, who lived on eightpence a day. What have these people to do with an enjoying English gentleman? . . . Talk of the ways of spreading a wholesome Conservatism throughout the country . . . . as far as communicating and establishing your creed is concerned, try a little pleasure. The way to keep up old customs is to enjoy old customs; the way to be satisfied with the present state of things is to enjoy that state of things. Over the 'Cavalier' mind this world passes with a thrill of delight; there is an exultation in a daily event, zest in the 'regular thing,' joy at an old feast."[1]

And that aptly represents himself. Such arrogance as he seemed to have in early life was the arrogance as much of enjoyment as of detachment of mind—the *insouciance* of the old Cavalier as much at least as the calm of a mind not accessible to the contagion of social feelings. He always talked, in youth, of his spirits as inconveniently high; and once wrote to me that he did not think they were quite as "boisterous" as they had been, and that his fellow-creatures were not sorry for the abatement; nevertheless he added, "I am quite fat, gross, and ruddy". He was, indeed, excessively fond of hunting, vault-

[1] See vol. ii., pp. 99, 100, of this work.

ing, and almost all muscular effort, so that his life would be wholly misconceived by any one who, hearing of his "detachment" of thought, should picture his mind as a vigilantly observant, far-away intelligence, such as Hawthorne's, for example. He liked to be in the thick of the *mêlée* when talk grew warm, though he was never so absorbed in it as not to keep his mind cool.

As I said, Bagehot was a Somersetshire man, with all the richness of nature and love for the external glow of life which the most characteristic counties of the South-west of England contrive to give to their most characteristic sons :—

"This north-west corner of Spain," he wrote once to a newspaper from the Pyrenees, "is the only place out of England where I should like to live. It is a sort of better Devonshire ; the coast is of the same kind, the sun is more brilliant, the sea is more brilliant, and there are mountains in the background. I have seen some more beautiful places and many grander, but I should not like to live in them. As Mr. Emerson puts it, 'I do not want to go to heaven before my time'. My English nature by early use and long habit is tied to a certain kind of scenery, soon feels the want of it, and is apt to be alarmed as well as pleased at perpetual snow and all sorts of similar beauties. But here, about San Sebastian, you have the best England can give you (at least if you hold, as I do, that Devonshire is the finest of our counties), and the charm, the ineffable, indescribable charm of the South too. Probably the sun has some secret effect on the nervous system that makes one inclined to be pleased, but the golden light lies upon everything, and one fancies that one is charmed only by the outward loveliness."

The vivacity and warm colouring of the landscapes of the South of England certainly had their full share in moulding his tastes, and possibly even his style.

Bagehot took the mathematical scholarship with his Bachelor's degree in the University of London in 1846, and the gold medal in Intellectual and Moral Philosophy with his Master's degree in 1848, in reading for which he mastered for the first time those principles of political economy which were to receive so much illustration from his genius in later years. But at this time philosophy, poetry, and theology, had, I think, a much greater share of his attention than any narrow and more sharply defined science. Shakespeare, Keats, Shelley and Wordsworth, Coleridge, Martineau and John Henry Newman,

all in their way exerted a great influence over his mind, and divided, not unequally, with the authors whom he was bound to study—that is, the Greek philosophers, together with Hume, Kant, J. S. Mill, and Sir William Hamilton—the time at his disposal. I have no doubt that for seven or eight years of his life the Roman Catholic Church had a great fascination for his imagination, though I do not think that he was ever at all near conversion. He was intimate with all Dr. Newman's writings. And of these the Oxford sermons, and the poems in the *Lyra Apostolica* afterwards separately published—partly, I believe, on account of the high estimate of them which Bagehot had himself expressed—were always his special favourites. The little poetry he wrote—and it is evident that he never had the kind of instinct for, or command of, language which is the first condition of genuine poetic genius—seems to me to have been obviously written under the spell which Dr. Newman's own few but finely-chiselled poems had cast upon him. If I give one specimen of Bagehot's poems, it is not that I think it in any way an adequate expression of his powers, but for a very different reason, because it will show those who have inferred from his other writings that his mind never deeply concerned itself with religion, how great is their mistake. Nor is there any real poverty of resource in these lines, except perhaps in the awkward mechanism of some of them. They were probably written when he was twenty-three or twenty-four.

"To the Roman Catholic Church.

"'Casta inceste.'—*Lucretius.*

"Thy lamp of faith is brightly trimmed,
Thy eager eye is not yet dimmed,
Thy stalwart step is yet unstayed,
Thy words are well obeyed.

"Thy proud voice vaunts of strength from heaven,
Thy proud foes carp, 'By hell's art given':
No Titan thou of earth-born bands,
Strange Church of hundred hands.

"Nursed without knowledge, born of night,
With hand of power and thoughts of light,
As Britain seas, far reachingly
O'er-rul'st thou history.

"Wild as La Pucelle in her hour,
O'er prostrate realms with awe-girt power
Thou marchest steadfast on thy path
Through wonder, love, and wrath.

"And will thy end be such as hers,
O'erpowered by earthly mail-clad powers
Condemned for cruel, magic art,
Though awful, bold of heart.

"Through thorn-clad Time's unending waste
With ardent step alone thou strayest,
As Jewish scape-goats tracked the wild,
Unholy, consecrate, defiled.

"Use not thy truth in manner rude
To rule for gain the multitude,
Or thou wilt see that truth depart,
To seek some holier heart;

"Then thou wilt watch thy errors lorn,
O'erspread by shame, o'erswept by scorn,
In lonely want without hope's smile,
As Tyre her weed-clad Isle.

"Like once thy chief, thou bear'st Christ's name;
Like him thou hast denied his shame,
Bold, eager, skilful, confident,
Oh, now like him repent!"

That has certainly no sign of the hand of the master in it, for the language is not moulded and vivified by the thought, but the thought itself is fine. And there is still better evidence than these lines would afford, of the fascination which the Roman Catholic Church had for Bagehot. A year or two later, in the letters on the *coup d'état*, to which I shall soon have to refer, there occurs the following passage. (He is trying to explain how the cleverness, the moral restlessness, and intellectual impatience of the French, all tend to unfit them for a genuine Parliamentary government):—

"I do not know that I can exhibit the way these qualities of the French character operate on their opinions better than by telling you how the Roman Catholic Church deals with them. I have rather attended to it since I came here. It gives sermons almost an interest, their being in French, and to those curious in intellectual matters, it is worth observing. In other times, and even now in out-of-the-way Spain, I suppose it may

be true that the Catholic Church has been opposed to inquiry and reasoning. But it is not so now and here. Loudly from the pens of a hundred writers, from the tongues of a thousand pulpits, in every note of thrilling scorn and exulting derision, she proclaims the contrary. Be she Christ's workman or Antichrist's, she knows her work too well. 'Reason, reason, reason!' exclaims she to the philosophers of this world. 'Put in practice what you teach if you would have others believe it. Be consistent. Do not prate to us of private judgment, when you are but yourselves repeating what you heard in the nursery, ill-mumbled remnants of a Catholic tradition. No; exemplify what you command; inquire and make search. Seek, and we warn ye that ye will never find, yet do as ye will. Shut yourselves up in a room, make your mind a blank, go down (as you speak) into the depth of your consciousness, scrutinise the mental structure, inquire for the elements of belief,—spend years, your best years, in the occupation,—and, at length, when your eyes are dim, and your brain hot, and your hands unsteady, then reckon what you have gained. See if you cannot count on your fingers the certainties you have reached; reflect which of them you doubted yesterday, which you may disbelieve to-morrow; or, rather, make haste—assume at random some essential *credenda*,—write down your inevitable postulates, enumerate your necessary axioms, toil on, toil on, spin your spider's web, adore your own soul, or, if ye prefer it, choose some German nostrum; try an intellectual intuition, or the pure reason, or the intelligible ideas, or the mesmeric clairvoyance, and when so, or somehow, you have attained your results, try them on mankind. Don't go out into the byeways and hedges; it is unnecessary. Ring a bell, call in the servants, give them a course of lectures, cite Aristotle, review Descartes, panegyrise Plato, and see if the *bonne* will understand you. It is you that say *Vox populi, vox Dei*. You see the people reject you. Or, suppose you succeed,—what you call succeeding. Your books are read; for three weeks, or even a season, you are the idol of the *salons*. Your hard words are on the lips of women; then a change comes—a new actress appears at the Théâtre Français or the Opera; her charms eclipse your theories; or a great catastrophe occurs; political liberty, it is said, is annihilated. *Il faut se faire mouchard*, is the observation of scoffers. Anyhow you are forgotten. Fifty years may be the gestation of a philosophy, not three its life. Before long, before you go to your grave, your six disciples leave you for some newer master, or to set up for themselves. The poorest priest in the remotest region of the Basses-Alpes has more power over men's souls than human cultivation. His ill-mouthed masses move women's souls—can you? Ye scoff at Jupiter, yet he at least was believed in, you have never been. Idol for idol, the *de*throned is better than the *un*throned. No, if you would reason, if you would teach, if you would speculate,—come to us. We have our premises ready; years upon years before you were born, intellects whom the best of you delight to magnify, toiled to systematise the creed of ages. Years upon years after you are

dead, better heads than yours will find new matter there to define, to divide, to arrange. Consider the hundred volumes of Aquinas. Which of you desire a higher life than that;—to deduce, to subtilise, discriminate, systematise, and decide the highest truth, and to be believed? Yet such was his luck, his enjoyment. He was what you would be. No, no, *credite*, *credite*. Ours is the life of speculation. The cloister is the home for the student. Philosophy is stationary, Catholicism progressive. *You* call. *We* are heard, etc.' So speaks each preacher, according to his ability. And when the dust and noise of present controversies have passed away, and, in the interior of the night, some grave historian writes out the tale of half-forgotten times, let him not forget to observe that, profoundly as the mediæval Church subdued the superstitious cravings of a painful and barbarous age, in after-years she dealt more discerningly still with the feverish excitement, the feeble vanities, and the dogmatic impatience of an over-intellectual generation."[1]

It is obvious, I think, both from the poem, and from these reflections, that what attracted Bagehot in the Church of Rome was the historical prestige and social authority which she had accumulated in believing and uncritical ages for use in the unbelieving and critical age in which we live,—while what he condemned and dreaded in her was her tendency to use her power over the multitude for purposes of a low ambition.

And as I am on this subject, this will be, I think, the best opportunity I shall have to say what I have got to say of Bagehot's later religious belief, without returning to it when I have to deal with a period in which the greatest part of his spare intellectual energy was given to other subjects. I do not think that the religious affections were very strong in Bagehot's mind, but the primitive religious instincts certainly were. From childhood he was what he certainly remained to the last, in spite of the rather antagonistic influence of the able, scientific group of men from whom he learned so much —a thorough transcendentalist, by which I mean one who could never doubt that there was a real foundation of the universe distinct from the outward show of its superficial qualities, and that the substance is never exhaustively expressed in these qualities. He often repeats in his essays Shelley's fine line, "Lift not the painted veil which those who

[1] See "Letters on the Coup d'État of 1851," vol. i., p. 108.

live call life," and the essence at least of the idea in it haunted him from his very childhood. In the essay on "Hartley Coleridge"—perhaps the most perfect in style of any of his writings—he describes most powerfully, and evidently in great measure from his own experience, the mysterious confusion between appearances and realities which so bewildered little Hartley,—the difficulty that he complained of in distinguishing between the various Hartleys,—"picture Hartley,"—"shadow Hartley," and between Hartley the subject and Hartley the object, the enigmatic blending of which last two Hartleys the child expressed by catching hold of his own arm, and then calling himself the "catch-me-fast Hartley". And in dilating on this bewildering experience of the child's, Bagehot borrows from his own recollections :—

"All children have a world of their own, as distinct from that of the grown people who gravitate around them, as the dreams of girlhood from our prosaic life, or the ideas of the kitten that plays with the falling leaves, from those of her carnivorous mother that catches mice, and is sedulous in her domestic duties. But generally about this interior existence children are dumb. You have warlike ideas, but you cannot say to a sinewy relative, 'My dear aunt, I wonder when the big bush in the garden will begin to walk about; I'm sure its a Crusader, and I was cutting it all the day with my steel sword. But what do you think, aunt? for I'm puzzled about its legs, because you see, aunt, it has only *one* stalk—and besides, aunt, the leaves.' You cannot remark this in secular life, but you hack at the infelicitous bush till you do not wholly reject the idea that your small garden is Palestine, and yourself the most adventurous of knights."[1]

They have a tradition in the family that this is but a fragment from Bagehot's own imaginative childhood, and certainly this visionary element in him was very vivid to the last. However, the transcendental or intellectual basis of religious belief was soon strengthened in him, as readers of his remarkable paper on Bishop Butler will easily see, by those moral and retributive instincts which warn us of the meaning and consequences of guilt :—

"The moral principle," he wrote in that essay, "whatever may be said to the contrary by complacent thinkers, is really and to most men a principle of

[1] See vol. i., p. 189.

fear. . . . Conscience is the condemnation of ourselves; we expect a penalty. As the Greek proverb teaches, 'Where there is shame, there is fear'. . . . How to be free from this is the question. How to get loose from this—how to be rid of the secret tie which binds the strong man and cramps his pride, and makes him angry at the beauty of the universe, which will not let him go forth like a great animal, like the king of the forest, in the glory of his might, but which restrains him with an inner fear and a secret foreboding that if he do but exalt himself he shall be abased, if he do but set forth his own dignity he will offend ONE who will deprive him of it. This, as has often been pointed out, is the source of the bloody rites of heathendom." [1]

And then, after a powerful passage, in which he describes the sacrificial superstitions of men like Achilles, he returns, with a flash of his own peculiar humour, to Bishop Butler, thus:—

"Of course it is not this kind of fanaticism that we impute to a prelate of the English Church; human sacrifices are not respectable, and Achilles was not rector of Stanhope. But though the costume and circumstances of life change, the human heart does not; its feelings remain. The same anxiety, the same consciousness of personal sin, which lead, in barbarous times, to what has been described, show themselves in civilised life as well. In this quieter period, their great manifestation is scrupulosity;" [2]

which he goes on to describe as a sort of inexhaustible anxiety for perfect compliance with the minutest positive commands which may be made the condition of forgiveness for the innumerable lapses of moral obligation. I am not criticising the paper, or I should point out that Bagehot failed in it to draw out the distinction between the primitive moral instinct and the corrupt superstition into which it runs; but I believe that he recognised the weight of this moral testimony of the conscience to a divine Judge, as well as the transcendental testimony of the intellect to an eternal substance of things, to the end of his life. And certainly in the reality of human free-will as the condition of all genuine moral life, he firmly believed. In his *Physics and Politics*—the subtle and original essay upon which, in conjunction with the essay on the English Constitution, Bagehot's reputation as a European thinker chiefly rests—he repeatedly guards himself (for instance, pp. 9, 10) against being

[1] See vol. i., p. 273. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 274.

supposed to think that in accepting the principle of evolution, he has accepted anything inconsistent either with spiritual creation, or with the free-will of man. On the latter point he adds :—

"No doubt the modern doctrine of the 'conservation of force,' if applied to decision, is inconsistent with free-will; if you hold that force is 'never lost or gained,' you cannot hold that there is a real gain, a sort of new creation of it in free volition. But I have nothing to do here with the universal 'conservation of force'. The conception of the nervous organs as stores of will-made power, does not raise or need so vast a discussion." [1]

And in the same book he repeatedly uses the expression "Providence," evidently in its natural meaning, to express the ultimate force at work behind the march of "evolution". Indeed, in conversation with me on this subject, he often said how much higher a conception of the creative mind, the new Darwinian ideas seemed to him to have introduced, as compared with those contained in what is called the argument from contrivance and design. On the subject of personal immortality, too, I do not think that Bagehot ever wavered. He often spoke, and even wrote, of "that vague sense of eternal continuity which is always about the mind, and which no one could bear to lose," and described it as being much more important to us than it even appears to be, important as that is; for, he said, "when we think we are thinking of the past, we are only thinking of a future that is to be like it". But with the exception of these cardinal points, I could hardly say how much Bagehot's mind was or was not affected by the great speculative controversies of later years. Certainly he became much more doubtful concerning the force of the historical evidence of Christianity than I ever was, and rejected, I think, entirely, though on what amount of personal study he had founded his opinion I do not know, the Apostolic origin of the fourth Gospel. Possibly his mind may have been latterly in suspense as to miracle altogether, though I am pretty sure that he had not come to a negative conclusion. He belonged, in common with myself, during the last years of

[1] *Physics and Politics*, p. 10.

his life, to a society in which these fundamental questions were often discussed; but he seldom spoke in it, and told me very shortly before his death that he shrank from such discussions on religious points, feeling that, in debates of this kind, they were not and could not be treated with anything like thoroughness. On the whole, I think, the cardinal article of his faith would be adequately represented even in the latest period of his life by the following passage in his essay on Bishop Butler:—

"In every step of religious argument we require the assumption, the belief, the faith, if the word is better, in an absolutely *perfect* Being; in and by whom we are, who is omnipotent as well as most holy; who moves on the face of the whole world, and ruleth all things by the word of his power. If we grant this, the difficulty of the opposition between what is here called the natural and the supernatural religion is removed; and without granting it, that difficulty is perhaps insuperable. It follows from the very idea and definition of an infinitely perfect Being, that he is within us as well as without us,—ruling the clouds of the air and the fishes of the sea, as well as the fears and thoughts of men; smiling through the smile of nature as well as warning with the pain of conscience,—'sine qualitate, bonum; sine quantitate, magnum; sine indigentiâ, creatorem; sine situ, præsidentem; sine habitu, omnia continentem; sine loco, ubique totum; sine tempore, sempiternum; sine ullâ sui mutatione, mutabilia facientem, nihilque patientem'. If we assume this, life is simple; without this, all is dark."[1]

Evidently, then, though Bagehot held that the doctrine of evolution by natural selection gave a higher conception of the Creator than the old doctrine of mechanical design, he never took any materialistic view of evolution. One of his early essays, written while at college, on some of the many points of the Kantian philosophy which he then loved to discuss, concluded with a remarkable sentence, which would probably have fairly expressed, even at the close of his life, his profound belief in God, and his partial sympathy with the agnostic view that we are, in great measure, incapable of apprehending, more than very dimly, His mind or purposes:—"Gazing after the infinite essence, we are like men watching through the drifting clouds for a glimpse of the true heavens on a drear November

[1] Vol. i., p. 278.

day ; layer after layer passes from our view, but still the same immovable grey rack remains ".

After Bagehot had taken his Master's degree, and while he was still reading Law in London, and hesitating between the Bar and the family bank, there came as Principal to University Hall (which is a hall of residence in connection with University College, London, established by the Presbyterians and Unitarians after the passing of the Dissenters' Chapel Act), the man who had, I think, a greater intellectual fascination for Bagehot than any of his contemporaries—Arthur Hugh Clough, Fellow of Oriel College, Oxford, and author of various poems of great genius, more or less familiar to the public, though Clough is perhaps better known as the subject of the exquisite poem written on his death in 1861, by his friend Matthew Arnold—the poem to which he gave the name of " Thyrsis " —than by even the most popular of his own. Bagehot had subscribed for the erection of University Hall, and took an active part at one time on its council. Thus he saw a good deal of Clough, and did what he could to mediate between that enigma to Presbyterian parents—a college-head who held himself serenely neutral on almost all moral and educational subjects interesting to parents and pupils, except the observance of disciplinary rules—and the managing body who bewildered him and were by him bewildered. I don't think either Bagehot or Clough's other friends were very successful in their mediation, but he at least gained in Clough a cordial friend, and a theme of profound intellectual and moral interest to himself which lasted him his life, and never failed to draw him into animated discussion long after Clough's own premature death ; and I think I can trace the effect which some of Clough's writings had on Bagehot's mind to the very end of his career. There were some points of likeness between Bagehot and Clough, but many more of difference. Both had the capacity for boyish spirits in them, and the florid colour which usually accompanies a good deal of animal vigour ; both were reserved men, with a great dislike of anything like the appearance of false sentiment, and both were passionate admirers of Wordsworth's poetry ; but Clough was slightly lymphatic, with a

great tendency to unexpressed and unacknowledged discouragement, and to the paralysis of silent embarrassment when suffering from such feelings, while Bagehot was keen, and very quickly evacuated embarrassing positions, and never returned to them. When, however, Clough was happy and at ease, there was a calm and silent radiance in his face, and his head was set with a kind of stateliness on his shoulders, that gave him almost an Olympian air; but this would sometimes vanish in a moment into an embarrassed taciturnity that was quite uncouth. One of his friends declares that the man who was said to be "a cross between a schoolboy and a bishop," must have been like Clough. There was in Clough, too, a large Chaucerian simplicity and a flavour of homeliness, so that now and then, when the light shone into his eyes, there was something, in spite of the air of fine scholarship and culture, which reminded one of the best likenesses of Burns. It was of Clough, I believe, that Emerson was thinking (though, knowing Clough intimately as he did, he was of course speaking mainly in joke) when he described the Oxford of that day thus: "'Ah,' says my languid Oxford gentleman, 'nothing new, and nothing true, and no matter'". No saying could misrepresent Clough's really buoyant and simple character more completely than that; but doubtless many of his sayings and writings, treating, as they did, most of the greater problems of life as insoluble, and enjoining a self-possessed composure under the discovery of their insolubility, conveyed an impression very much like this to men who came only occasionally in contact with him. Bagehot, in his article on Crabb Robinson, says that the latter, who in those days seldom remembered names, always described Clough as "that admirable and accomplished man—you know whom I mean—the one who never says anything". And certainly Clough was often taciturn to the last degree, or if he opened his lips, delighted to open them only to scatter confusion by discouraging, in words at least, all that was then called earnestness—as, for example, by asking: "Was it ordained that twice two should make four, simply for the intent that boys and girls should be cut to the heart that they do not make five? Be

content ; when the veil is raised, perhaps they will make five ! Who knows ? " [1]

Clough's chief fascination for Bagehot was, I think, that he had as a poet in some measure rediscovered, at all events realised, as few ever realised before, the enormous difficulty of finding truth—a difficulty which he somewhat paradoxically held to be enhanced rather than diminished by the intensity of the truest modern passion for it. The stronger the desire, he teaches, the greater is the danger of illegitimately satisfying that desire by persuading ourselves that what we *wish* to believe, is true, and the greater the danger of ignoring the actual confusions of human things :—

" Rules baffle instincts, instincts rules,
Wise men are bad, and good are fools,
Facts evil, wishes vain appear,
We cannot go, why are we here ?

" Oh, may we, for assurance' sake,
Some arbitrary judgment take,
And wilfully pronounce it clear,
For this or that 'tis, we are here ?

" Or is it right, and will it do
To pace the sad confusion through,
And say, it does not yet appear
What we shall be—what we are here ? "

This warning to withhold judgment and not cheat ourselves into beliefs which our own imperious desire to believe had alone engendered, is given with every variety of tone and modulation, and couched in all sorts of different forms of fancy and apologue, throughout Clough's poems. He insists on " the *ruinous* force of the will " to persuade us of illusions which please us ; of the tendency of practical life to give us beliefs which suit that practical life, but are none the truer for that ; and is never weary of warning us that a firm belief in a falsity can be easily generated :—

" *Action will furnish belief*,—but will that belief be the true one ?
This is the point, you know. However, it doesn't much matter.
What one wants, I suppose, is to predetermine the action,
So as to make it entail, not a chance belief, but the true one."

[1] *Poems and Prose Remains of Arthur Hugh Clough*, vol. i., p. 175.

This practical preaching, which Clough urges in season and out of season, met an answering chord in Bagehot's mind, not so much in relation to religious belief as in relation to the over-haste and over-eagerness of human conduct, and I can trace the effect of it in all his writings, political and otherwise, to the end of his life. Indeed, it affected him much more in later days than in the years immediately following his first friendship with Clough. With all his boyish dash, there was something in Bagehot even in youth which dreaded precipitancy, and not only precipitancy itself, but those moral situations tending to precipitancy which men who have no minds of their own to make up, so often court. In later life he pleased himself by insisting that, on Darwin's principle, civilised men, with all the complex problems of modern life to puzzle them, suspend their judgment so little, and are so eager for action, only because they have inherited from the earlier, simpler, and more violent ages, an excessive predisposition to action unsuited to our epoch and dangerous to our future development. But it was Clough, I think, who first stirred in Bagehot's mind this great dread of "the ruinous force of the will," a phrase he was never weary of quoting, and which might almost be taken as the motto of his *Physics and Politics*, the great conclusion of which is that in the "age of discussion," grand policies and high-handed diplomacy and sensational legislation of all kinds will become rarer and rarer, because discussion will point out all the difficulties of such policies in relation to a state of existence so complex as our own, and will, in this way, tend to repress the excess of practical energy handed down to us by ancestors, to whom life was a sharper, simpler, and more perilous affair.

But the time for Bagehot's full adoption of the suspensive principle in public affairs was not yet. In 1851 he went to Paris, shortly before the *coup d'état*. And while all England was assailing Louis Napoleon (justly enough, as I think) for his perfidy, and his impatience of the self-willed Assembly he could not control, Bagehot was preparing a deliberate and very masterly defence of that bloody and high-handed act. Even Bagehot would, I think, if pressed judiciously in later life, have

admitted—though I can't say he ever *did*—that the *coup d'état* was one of the best illustrations of "the ruinous force of the will," in engendering, or at least crystallising, a false intellectual conclusion as to the political possibilities of the future, which recent history could produce. Certainly, he always spoke somewhat apologetically of these early letters, though I never heard him expressly retract their doctrine. In 1851 a knot of young Unitarians, of whom I was then one, headed by the late Mr. J. Langton Sanford—afterwards the historian of the Great Rebellion, who survived Bagehot barely four months—had engaged to help for a time in conducting the *Inquirer*, which then was, and still is, the chief literary and theological organ of the Unitarian body. Our *régime* was, I imagine, a time of great desolation for the very tolerant and thoughtful constituency for whom we wrote; and many of them, I am confident, yearned, and were fully justified in yearning, for those better days when this tyranny of ours should be overpast. Sanford and Osler did a good deal to throw cold water on the rather optimist and philanthropic politics of the most sanguine, because the most benevolent and open-hearted, of Dissenters. Roscoe criticised their literary work from the point of view of a devotee of the Elizabethan poets; and I attempted to prove to them in distinct heads, first, that their laity ought to have the protection afforded by a liturgy against the arbitrary prayers of their ministers; and next, that at least the great majority of their sermons ought to be suppressed, and the habit of delivering them discontinued almost altogether. Only a denomination of "just men" trained in tolerance for generations, and in that respect, at least, made all but "perfect," would have endured it at all; but I doubt if any of us caused the Unitarian body so much grief as Bagehot, who never was a Unitarian, but who contributed a series of brilliant letters on the *coup d'état*, in which he trod just as heavily on the toes of his colleagues as he did on those of the public by whom the *Inquirer* was taken. In those days he not only, as I have already shown, eulogised the Catholic Church, but he supported the Prince-President's military violence, attacked the freedom of the Press in France, maintained that the country

was wholly unfit for true Parliamentary government, and—worst of all, perhaps—insinuated a panegyric on Louis Napoleon himself, asserting that he had been far better prepared for the duties of a statesman by gambling on the turf, than he would have been by poring over the historical and political dissertations of the wise and the good. This was Bagehot's day of cynicism. The seven letters which he wrote on the *coup d'état* were certainly very exasperating, and yet they were not caricatures of his real thought, for his private letters at the time were more cynical still. Crabb Robinson, in speaking of him, used ever afterwards to describe him to me as "that friend of yours—you know whom I mean, you rascal!—who wrote those abominable, those most disgraceful letters on the *coup d'état*—I did not forgive him for years after". Nor do I wonder, even now, that a sincere friend of constitutional freedom and intellectual liberty, like Crabb Robinson, found them difficult to forgive. They were light and airy, and even flippant, on a very grave subject. They made nothing of the Prince's perjury; and they took impertinent liberties with all the dearest prepossessions of the readers of the *Inquirer*, and assumed their sympathy just where Bagehot knew that they would be most revolted by his opinions. Nevertheless, they had a vast deal of truth in them, and no end of ability, and I hope that there will be many to read them with interest now that they are here republished. There is a good deal of the raw material of history in them, and certainly I doubt if Bagehot ever again hit the satiric vein of argument so well. Here is a passage that will bear taking out of its context, and therefore not so full of the shrewd malice of these letters as many others, but which will illustrate their ability. It is one in which Bagehot maintained for the first time the view (which I believe he subsequently almost persuaded English politicians to accept, though in 1852 it was a mere flippant novelty, a paradox, and a heresy) that free institutions are apt to succeed with a stupid people, and to founder with a ready-witted and vivacious one. After broaching this, he goes on:—

"I see you are surprised. You are going to say to me as Socrates did to Polus, 'My young friend, *of course* you are right, but will you ex-

plain what you mean, as you are not yet intelligible?' I will do so as well as I can, and endeavour to make good what I say, not by an *a priori* demonstration of my own, but from the details of the present and the facts of history. Not to begin by wounding any present susceptibilities, let me take the Roman character, for, with one great exception—I need not say to whom I allude—they are the great political people of history. Now is not a certain dulness their most visible characteristic? What is the history of their speculative mind? A blank. What their literature? A copy. They have left not a single discovery in any abstract science, not a single perfect or well-formed work of high imagination. The Greeks, the perfection of human and accomplished genius, bequeathed to mankind the ideal forms of self-idolising art; the Romans imitated and admired. The Greeks explained the laws of nature; the Romans wondered and despised. The Greeks invented a system of numerals second only to that now in use; the Romans counted to the end of their days with the clumsy apparatus which we still call by their name. The Greeks made a capital and scientific calendar; the Romans began their month when the Pontifex Maximus happened to spy out the new moon. Throughout Latin literature this is the perpetual puzzle—Why are we free and they slaves?—we prætors and they barbers? Why do the stupid people always win and the clever people always lose? I need not say that in real sound stupidity the English people are unrivalled. You'll have more wit, and better wit, in an Irish street-row than would keep Westminster Hall in humour for five weeks. . . . These valuable truths are no discoveries of mine. They are familiar enough to people whose business it is to know them. Hear what a douce and aged attorney says of your peculiarly promising barrister. 'Sharp? Oh! yes, yes: he's too sharp by half. He isn't *safe*, not a minute, isn't that young man.' 'What style, sir,' asked of an East India Director some youthful aspirant for literary renown, 'is most to be preferred in the composition of official despatches? 'My good fellow,' responded the ruler of Hindostan, 'the style *as we* like, is the Humdrum.'"[1]

The permanent value of these papers is due to the freshness of their impressions of the French capital, and their true criticisms of Parisian journalism and society; their perverseness consists in this, that Bagehot steadily ignored in them the distinction between the duty of resisting anarchy, and the assumption of the Prince-President that this could only be done by establishing his own dynasty, and deferring *sine die* that great constitutional experiment which is now once more, no thanks to him or his Government, on its trial; an experiment which, for anything we see, had at least as good a chance then as now,

[1] See "Letters on the Coup d'État," vol. i., pp. 100, 102.

and under a firm and popular chief of the executive like Prince Louis, would probably have had a better chance then than it has now under MacMahon. I need hardly say that in later life Bagehot was by no means blind to the political shortcomings of Louis Napoleon's *régime*, as the article republished from the *Economist*, sufficiently proves. Moreover, he rejoiced heartily in the moderation of the republican statesmen during the severe trials of the months which just preceded his own death, in 1877, and expressed his sincere belief—confirmed by the history of the last year and a half—that the existing Republic has every prospect of life and growth.

During that residence in Paris, Bagehot, though, as I have said, in a somewhat cynical frame of mind, was full of life and courage, and was beginning to feel his own genius, which perhaps accounts for the air of recklessness so foreign to him, which he never adopted either before or since. During the riots he was a good deal in the streets, and from a mere love of art helped the Parisians to construct some of their barricades, notwithstanding the fact that his own sympathy was with those who shot down the barricades, not with those who manned them. He climbed over the rails of the Palais Royal on the morning of 2nd December to breakfast, and used to say that he was the only person who did breakfast there on that day. Victor Hugo is certainly wrong in asserting that no one expected Louis Napoleon to use force, and that the streets were as full as usual when the people were shot down, for the gates of the Palais Royal were shut quite early in the day. Bagehot was very much struck by the ferocious look of the Montagnards.

"Of late," he wrote to me, "I have been devoting my entire attention to the science of barricades, which I found amusing. They have systematised it in a way which is pleasing to the cultivated intellect. We had only one good day's fighting, and I naturally kept out of cannon-shot. But I took a quiet walk over the barricades in the morning, and superintended the construction of three with as much keenness as if I had been clerk of the works. You've seen lots, of course, at Berlin, but I should not think those Germans were up to a real Montagnard, who is the most horrible being to the eye I ever saw,—sallow, sincere, sour fanaticism, with grizzled moustaches, and a strong wish to shoot you rather than not. The Montag-

nards are a scarce commodity, the real race—only three or four, if so many, to a barricade. If you want a Satan any odd time, they'll do ; only I hope that *he* don't believe in human brotherhood. It is not possible to respect any one who does, and I should be loth to confound the notion of *our* friend's solitary grandeur by supposing him to fraternise," etc. "I think M. Buonaparte is entitled to great praise. He has very good heels to his boots, and the French just want treading down, and nothing else—calm, cruel, business-like oppression, to take the dogmatic conceit out of their heads. The spirit of generalisation which, John Mill tells us, honourably distinguishes the French mind, has come to this, that every Parisian wants his head *tapped* in order to get the formulæ and nonsense out of it. And it would pay to perform the operation, for they are very clever on what is within the limit of their experience, and all that can be 'expanded' in terms of it, but beyond, it is all generalisation and folly. . . . So I am for any carnivorous government."

And again, in the same letter:—

"Till the Revolution came I had no end of trouble to find conversation, but now they'll talk against everybody, and against the President like mad—and they talk immensely well, and the language is like a razor, capital if you are skilful, but sure to cut you if you aren't. A fellow can talk German in crude forms, and I don't see it sounds any worse, but this stuff is horrid unless you get it *quite* right. A French lady made a striking remark to me : '*C'est une révolution qui a sauvé la France. Tous mes amis sont mis en prison.*' She was immensely delighted that such a pleasing way of saving her country had been found."

Of course the style of these familiar private letters conveys a gross caricature not only of Bagehot's maturer mind, but even of the judgment of the published letters, and I quote them only to show that at the time when he composed these letters on the *coup d'état*, Bagehot's mood was that transient mood of reckless youthful cynicism through which so many men of genius pass. I do not think he had at any time any keen sympathy with the multitude, *i.e.*, with masses of unknown men. And that he ever felt what has since then been termed "the enthusiasm of humanity," the sympathy with "the toiling millions of men sunk in labour and pain," he himself would strenuously have denied. Such sympathy, even when men really desire to feel it, is, indeed, very much oftener coveted than actually felt by men as a living motive; and I am not quite sure that Bagehot would have even wished to feel it. Nevertheless, he had not the faintest trace of real hardness

about him towards people whom he knew and understood. He could not bear to give pain; and when, in rare cases by youthful inadvertence, he gave it needlessly, I have seen how much and what lasting vexation it caused him. Indeed, he was capable of great sacrifices to spare his friends but a little suffering.

It was, I think, during his stay in Paris that Bagehot finally decided to give up the notion of practising at the Bar, and to join his father in the Somersetshire Bank and in his other business as a merchant and shipowner. This involved frequent visits to London and Liverpool, and Bagehot soon began to take a genuine interest in the larger issues of commerce, and maintained to the end that "business is much more amusing than pleasure". Nevertheless, he could not live without the intellectual life of London, and never stayed more than six weeks at a time in the country without finding some excuse for going to town; and long before his death he made his home there. Hunting was the only sport he really cared for. He was a dashing rider, and a fresh wind was felt blowing through his earlier literary efforts, as though he had been thinking in the saddle, an effect wanting in his later essays, where you see chiefly the calm analysis of a lucid observer. But most of the ordinary amusements of young people he detested. He used to say that he wished he could think balls *wicked*, being so stupid as they were, and all "the little blue and pink girls, so like each other,"—a sentiment partly due, perhaps, to his extreme shortness of sight.

Though Bagehot never doubted the wisdom of his own decision to give up the law for the life of commerce, he thoroughly enjoyed his legal studies in his friend the late Mr. Justice Quain's chambers, and in those of the present Vice-Chancellor, Sir Charles Hall, and he learnt there a good deal that was of great use to him in later life. Moreover, in spite of his large capacity for finance and commerce, there were small difficulties in Bagehot's way as a banker and merchant, which he felt somewhat keenly.[1] He was always absent-

[1] In a letter to me of this date, he says: "I write this in my father's counting-house. It is a queer life and takes much *will* doing the sums, but not more than I looked for. It *must* do anyhow."

minded about *minutiæ*. For instance, to the last, he could not correct a proof well, and was sure to leave a number of small inaccuracies, harshnesses, and slipshodnesses in style, uncorrected. He declared at one time that he was wholly unable to "add up," and in his mathematical exercises in college he had habitually been inaccurate in trifles. I remember Professor Malden, on returning one of his Greek exercises, saying to him, with that curiously precise and emphatic articulation which made every remark of his go so much farther than that of our other lecturers: "Mr. Bagehot, you wage an internecine war with your aspirates"—not meaning, of course, that he ever left them out in pronunciation, but that he neglected to put them in in his written Greek. And to the last, even in his printed Greek quotations, the slips of this kind were always numerous. This habitual difficulty—due, I believe, to a preoccupied imagination—in attending to small details, made a banker's duties seem irksome and formidable to him at first; and even to the last, in his most effective financial papers, he would generally get some one else to look after the precise figures for him. But in spite of all this, and in spite of a real attraction for the study of law, he was sure that his head would not stand the hot Courts and heavy wigs which make the hot Courts hotter, or the night-work of a thriving barrister in case of success; and he was certainly quite right. Indeed, had he chosen the Bar, he would have had no leisure for those two or three remarkable books which have made his reputation,—books which have been already translated into all the literary and some of the unliterary languages of Europe, and two of which are, I believe, used as text-books in some of the American Colleges.[1] Moreover, in all probability, his life would have been much shorter into the bargain. Soon after his return from Paris he devoted himself in earnest to banking and commerce, and also began that series of articles, first for the *Prospective* and then for the

[1] Since the first edition of this work was published, the Oxford Board of Studies has made a text-book of Mr. Bagehot's *English Constitution* for that University, and his *Economic Studies* is a text-book in the University of Cambridge.

National Review (which latter periodical he edited in conjunction with me for several years), the most striking of which he republished in 1858, under the awkward and almost forbidding title of *Estimates of some Englishmen and Scotchmen*—a book which never attracted the attention it deserved, and which has been long out of print. In republishing most of these essays as I am now doing,—and a later volume[1] containing those essays on statesmen and politicians which are omitted from these volumes,—it is perhaps only fair to say that Bagehot in later life used to speak ill, much too ill, of his own early style. He used to declare that his early style affected him like the "jogging of a cart without springs over a very rough road," and no doubt in his earliest essays something abrupt and spasmodic may easily be detected. Still, this was all so inextricably mingled with flashes of insight and humour which could ill be spared, that I always protested against any notion of so revising the essays as to pare down their excrescences.

I have never understood the comparative failure of this volume of Bagehot's early essays ; and a comparative failure it was, though I do not deny that, even at the time, it attracted much attention among the most accomplished writers of the day, and that I have been urged to republish it, as I am now doing, by many of the ablest men of my acquaintance. Obviously, as I have admitted, there are many faults of workmanship in it. Now and then the banter is forced. Often enough the style is embarrassed. Occasionally, perhaps, the criticism misses its mark, or is over-refined. But, taken as a whole, I hardly know any book that is such good reading, that has so much lucid vision in it, so much shrewd and curious knowledge of the world, so sober a judgment and so dashing a humour combined. Take this, for instance, out of the paper on "The First Edinburgh Reviewers," concerning the judgment passed by Lord Jeffrey on the poetry of Bagehot's favourite poet, Wordsworth[2] :—

"The world has given judgment. Both Mr. Wordsworth and Lord Jeffrey have received their rewards. The one had his own generation—the laughter of men, the applause of drawing-rooms, the concurrence of

[1] *Biographical Studies.* [2] *Ibid.*

the crowd; the other, a succeeding age, the fond enthusiasm of secret students, the lonely rapture of lonely minds. And each has received according to his kind. If all cultivated men speak differently because of the existence of Wordsworth and Coleridge; if not a thoughtful English book has appeared for years without some trace for good or for evil of their influence; if sermon-writers subsist upon their thoughts; if 'sacred' poets thrive by translating their weaker portions into the speech of women; if, when all this is over, some sufficient part of their writing will ever be fitting food for wild musing and solitary meditation, surely this is because they possessed the inner nature—an 'intense and glowing mind'—'the vision and the faculty divine'. But if, perchance, in their weaker moments the great authors of the Lyrical ballads did ever imagine that the world was to pause because of their verses, that 'Peter Bell' would be popular in drawing-rooms, that 'Christabel' would be perused in the City, that people of fashion would make a hand-book of the *Excursion*, it was well for them to be told at once that it was not so. Nature ingeniously prepared a shrill artificial voice, which spoke in season and out of season, enough and more than enough, what will ever be the idea of the cities of the plain concerning those who live alone among the mountains; of the frivolous concerning the grave; of the gregarious concerning the recluse; of those who laugh concerning those who laugh not; of the common concerning the uncommon; of those who lend on usury concerning those who lend not; the notions of the world, of those whom it will not reckon among the righteous. It said, 'This won't do'. And so in all times will the lovers of polished Liberalism speak concerning the intense and lonely 'prophet'." [1]

I choose that passage because it illustrates so perfectly Bagehot's double vein, his sympathy with the works of high imagination, and his clear insight into that busy life which does not and cannot take note of works of high imagination, and which would not do the work it does, if it could. And this is the characteristic of all the essays. How admirably, for instance, in his essay on Shakespeare, does he draw out the individuality of a poet who is generally supposed to be so completely hidden in his plays; and with how keen a satisfaction does he discern and display the prosperous and practical man in Shakespeare—the qualities which made him a man of substance and a Conservative politician, as well as the qualities which made him a great dramatist and a great dreamer. No doubt Bagehot had a strong personal sympathy with the double life. Somersetshire probably never believed that the

[1] See vol. ii., p. 76.

imaginative student, the omnivorous reader, could prosper as a banker and a man of business, and it was a satisfaction to him to show that he understood the world far better than the world had ever understood him. Again, how delicate is his delineation of Hartley Coleridge; how firm and clear his study of "Sir Robert Peel";[1] and how graphically he paints the literary pageant of Gibbon's tame but splendid genius! Certainly the literary taste of England never made a greater blunder than when it passed by this remarkable volume of essays with comparatively little notice.

In 1858, Bagehot married the eldest daughter of the Right Honourable James Wilson, who died two years later in India, whither he had gone as the financial member of the Indian Council, to reduce to some extent the financial anarchy which then prevailed there. This marriage gave Bagehot nineteen years of undisturbed happiness, and certainly led to the production of his most popular and original, if not in every respect his most brilliant books. It connected him with the higher world of politics, without which he would hardly have studied and written as he did on the English Constitution; and by making him the Editor of the *Economist*, it compelled him to give his whole mind as much to the theoretic side of commerce and finance, as his own duties had already compelled him to give it to the practical side. But when I speak of his marriage as the last impulse which determined his chief work in life, I do not forget that he had long been prepared both for political and for financial speculation by his early education. His father, a man of firm and deliberate political convictions, had taken a very keen interest in the agitation for the great Reform Bill of 1832, and had materially helped to return a Liberal member for his county after it passed. Probably no one in all England knew the political history of the country since the peace more accurately than he. Bagehot often said that when he wanted any detail concerning the English political history of the last half-century, he had only to ask his father, to obtain it. His uncle, Mr. Vincent Stuckey, too, was a man of the world, and his house in Langport was

[1] See *Biographical Studies*.

a focus of many interests during Bagehot's boyhood. Mr. Stuckey had begun life at the Treasury, and was at one time private secretary to Mr. Huskisson; and when he gave up that career to take a leading share in the Somersetshire Bank, he kept up for a long time his house in London, and his relations with political society there. He was fond of his nephew, as was Bagehot of him; and there was always a large field of interests, and often there were men of eminence, to be found in his house. Thus, Bagehot had been early prepared for the wider field of political and financial thought, to which he gave up so much of his time after his marriage.

I need not say nearly as much on this later aspect of Bagehot's life as I have done on its early and more purely literary aspects, because his services in this direction are already well appreciated by the public. But this I should like to point out, that he could never have written as he did on the English Constitution, without having acutely studied living statesmen and their ways of acting on each other; that his book was essentially the book of a most realistic, because a most vividly imaginative, observer of the actual world of politics—the book of a man who was not blinded by habit and use to the enormous difficulties in the way of "government by public meeting," and to the secret of the various means by which in practice those difficulties had been attenuated or surmounted. It is the book of a meditative man who had mused much on the strange workings of human instincts, no less than of a quick observer who had seen much of external life. Had he not studied the men before he studied the institutions, had he not concerned himself with individual statesmen before he turned his attention to the mechanism of our Parliamentary system, he could never have written his book on the English Constitution.

I think the same may be said of his book on Physics and Politics, a book in which I find new force and depth every time I take it up afresh. It is true that Bagehot had a keen sympathy with natural science, that he devoured all Mr. Darwin's and Mr. Wallace's books, and many of a much more technical kind, as, for example, Professor Huxley's on the

Principles of Physiology, and grasped the leading ideas contained in them with a firmness and precision that left nothing to be desired. But after all, *Physics and Politics* could never have been written without that sort of living insight into man which was the life of all his earlier essays. The notion that a "cake of custom," of rigid, inviolable law, was the first requisite for a strong human society, and that the very cause which was thus essential for the *first* step of progress—the step towards unity—was the great danger of the second step—the step out of uniformity—and was the secret of all arrested and petrified civilisations, like the Chinese, is an idea which first germinated in Bagehot's mind at the time he was writing his cynical letters from Paris about stupidity being the first requisite of a political people; though I admit, of course, that it could not have borne the fruit it did, without Mr. Darwin's conception of a natural selection through conflict, to help it on. Such passages as the following could evidently never have been written by a mere student of Darwinian literature, nor without the trained imagination exhibited in Bagehot's literary essays:—

"No one will ever comprehend the arrested civilisations unless he sees the strict dilemma of early society. Either men had no law at all and lived in confused tribes, hardly hanging together, or they had to obtain a fixed law by processes of incredible difficulty. Those who surmounted that difficulty soon destroyed all those that lay in their way who did not. And then they themselves were caught in their own yoke. The customary discipline which could only be imposed on any early men by terrible sanctions, continued with those sanctions, and killed out of the whole society the propensities to variation which are the principle of progress. Experience shows how incredibly difficult it is to get men really to encourage the principle of originality;"[1]

and, as Bagehot held, for a very good reason, namely, that without a long accumulated and inherited tendency to discourage originality, society would never have gained the cohesion requisite for effective common action against its external foes. No one, I think, who had not studied as Bagehot had in actual life, first, the vast and unreasoning Conservatism of politically strong societies, like that of rural England, and

[1] *Physics and Politics*, p. 57.

next, the perilous mobility and impressibility of politically weak societies, like that of Paris, would ever have seen as he did the close connection of these ideas with Mr. Darwin's principle of natural selection by conflict. And here I may mention, by way of illustrating this point, that Bagehot delighted in observing and expounding the bovine slowness of rural England in acquiring a new idea. Somersetshire, he used to boast, would not subscribe £1000 "to be represented by an archangel"; and in one letter which I received from him during the Crimean War, he narrated with great gusto an instance of the tenacity with which a Somersetshire rustic stuck to his own notion of what was involved in conquering an enemy. "The Somersetshire view," he wrote, "of the chance of bringing the war to a successful conclusion is as follows:—*Countryman:* 'How old, zir, be the Zar?'—*Myself:* 'About sixty-three'.—*Countryman:* 'Well, now, I can't think however they be to take he. They do tell I that Rooshia is a very big place, and if he doo goo right into the middle of 'n, you could not take he, not nohow.' I talked till the train came (it was at a station), and endeavoured to show how the war might be finished without capturing the Czar, but I fear without effect. At last he said, 'Well, zir, I hope, *as you do say, zir*, we shall take he,' as I got into the carriage." It is clear that the humorous delight which Bagehot took in this tenacity and density of rural conceptions, was partly the cause of the attention which he paid to the subject. No doubt there was in him a vein of purely instinctive sympathy with this density, for intellectually he could not even have understood it. Writing on the intolerable and fatiguing cleverness of French journals, he describes in one of his Paris letters the true enjoyment he felt in reading a thoroughly stupid article in the *Herald* (a Tory paper now no more), and I believe he was quite sincere. It was, I imagine, a real pleasure to him to be able to preach, in his last general work, that "a cake of custom," just sufficiently stiff to make innovation of any kind very difficult, but not quite stiff enough to make it impossible, is the true condition of durable progress.

The coolness of his judgment, and his power of seeing both

sides of a question, undoubtedly gave Bagehot's political opinions considerable weight with both parties, and I am quite aware that a great majority of the ablest political thinkers of the time would disagree with me when I say, that personally I do not rate Bagehot's sagacity as a practical politician nearly so highly as I rate his wise analysis of the growth and *rationale* of political institutions. Everything he wrote on the politics of the day was instructive, but, to my mind at least, seldom decisive, and, as I thought, often not true. He did not feel, and avowed that he did not feel, much sympathy with the masses, and he attached far too much relative importance to the refinement of the governing classes. That, no doubt, is most desirable, if you can combine it with a genuine consideration for the interests of "the toiling millions of men sunk in labour and pain". But experience, I think, sufficiently shows that they are often, perhaps even generally, incompatible; and that democratic governments of very low tone may consult more adequately the leading interests of the "dim common populations" than aristocratic governments of very high calibre. Bagehot hardly admitted this, and always seemed to me to think far more of the intellectual and moral tone of governments, than he did of the intellectual and moral interests of the people governed.

Again, those who felt most profoundly Bagehot's influence as a political thinker, would probably agree with me that it was his leading idea in politics to discourage anything like too much action of any kind, legislative or administrative, and most of all anything like an ambitious colonial or foreign policy. This was not owing to any *doctrinaire* adhesion to the principle of *laissez-faire*. He supported, hesitatingly no doubt, but in the end decidedly, the Irish Land Bill, and never belonged to that straitest sect of the Economists who decry, as contrary to the laws of economy, and little short of a crime, the intervention of Government in matters which the conflict of individual self-interests might possibly be trusted to determine. It was from a very different point of view that he was so anxious to deprecate ambitious policies, and curb the practical energies of the most energetic of peoples. Next

to Clough, I think that Sir George Cornewall Lewis had the most powerful influence over him in relation to political principles. There has been no statesman in our time whom he liked so much or regretted so deeply; and he followed him most of all in deprecating the greater part of what is called political *energy*. Bagehot held with Sir George Lewis that men in modern days do a great deal too much; that half the public actions, and a great many of the private actions of men, had better never have been done; that modern statesmen and modern peoples are far too willing to burden themselves with responsibilities. He held, too, that men have not yet sufficiently verified the principles on which action ought to proceed, and that till they have done so, it would be better far to act less. Lord Melbourne's habitual query, "Can't you let it alone?" seemed to him, as regarded all new responsibilities, the wisest of hints for our time. He would have been glad to find a fair excuse for giving up India, for throwing the Colonies on their own resources, and for persuading the English people to accept deliberately the place of a fourth or fifth-rate European power—which was not, in his estimation, a cynical or unpatriotic wish, but quite the reverse, for he thought that such a course would result in generally raising the calibre of the national mind, conscience, and taste. In his *Physics and Politics* he urges generally, as I have before pointed out, that the practical energy of existing peoples in the West, is far in advance of the knowledge that would alone enable them to turn that energy to good account. He wanted to see the English a more leisurely race, taking more time to consider all their actions, and suspending their decisions on all great policies and enterprises till either these were well matured, or, as he expected it to be in the great majority of cases, the opportunity for sensational action was gone by. He quotes from Clough what really might have been taken as the motto of his own political creed :—

> "Old things need not be therefore true,
> O brother men, nor yet the new;
> Ah, still awhile, th' old thought retain,
> And yet consider it again".

And in all this, if it were advanced rather as a principle of education than as a principle of political practice, there would be great force. But when he applied this teaching, not to the individual but to the State, not to encourage the gradual formation of a new type of character, but to warn the nation back from a multitude of practical duties of a simple though arduous kind, such as those, for example, which we have undertaken in India—duties, the value of which, performed even as they are, could hardly be overrated, if only because they involve so few debatable and doubtful assumptions, and are only the elementary tasks of the hewers of wood and drawers of water for the civilisation of the future—I think Bagehot made the mistake of attaching far too little value to the moral instincts of a sagacious people, and too much to the refined deductions of a singularly subtle intellect. I suspect that the real effect of suddenly stopping the various safety-valves, by which the spare energy of our nation is diverted to the useful work of roughly civilising other lands, would be, not to stimulate the deliberative understanding of the English people, but to stunt its thinking as well as its acting powers, and render it more frivolous and more vacant-minded than it is.

In the field of economy there are so many thinkers who are far better judges of Bagehot's invaluable work than myself, that I will say a very few words indeed upon it. It is curious, but I believe it to be almost universally true, that what may be called the primitive impulse of all economic *action*, is generally also strong in great economic *thinkers* and financiers—I mean the saving, or at least the anti-spending, instinct. It is very difficult to see why it should be so, but I think it *is* so. No one was more large-minded in his view of finance than Bagehot. He preached that, in the case of a rich country like England, efficiency was vastly more important than the mere reduction of expenditure, and held that Mr. Gladstone and other great Chancellors of the Exchequer made a great deal too much of saving for saving's sake. None the less he himself had the anti-spending instinct in some strength, and he was evidently pleased to note its existence in his favourite economic thinker, Ricardo. Generous as Bagehot was—and

no one ever hesitated less about giving largely for an adequate end—he always told me, even in boyhood, that spending was disagreeable to him, and that it took something of an effort to pay away money. In a letter before me, he tells his correspondent of the marriage of an acquaintance, and adds that the lady is a Dissenter, "and therefore probably rich. Dissenters don't spend, *and quite right too.*" I suppose it takes some feeling of this kind to give the intellect of a man of high capacity that impulse towards the study of the laws of the increase of wealth, without which men of any imagination would be more likely to turn in other directions. Nevertheless, even as an economist, Bagehot's most original writing was due less to his deductions from the fundamental axioms of the modern science, than to that deep insight into men which he had gained in many different fields. The essays, published in the *Fortnightly Review* for February and May, 1876 [1]—in which he showed so powerfully how few of the conditions of the science known to us as "political economy" have ever been really applicable to any large portion of the globe during the longest periods of human history—furnish quite an original study in social history and in human nature. His striking book, *Lombard Street*, is quite as much a study of bankers and bill-brokers as of the principles of banking. Take, again, Bagehot's view of the intellectual position and value of the capitalist classes. Every one who knows his writings in the *Economist*, knows how he ridiculed the common impression that the chief service of the capitalist class—that by which they *earn* their profits—is merely what the late Mr. Senior used to call "abstinence," that is, the practice of deferring their enjoyment of their savings in order that those savings may multiply themselves; and knows too how inadequate he thought it, merely to add that when capitalists are themselves managers, they discharge the task of "superintending labour" as well. Bagehot held that the capitalists of a commerical country do—not merely the saving, and the work of foremen in superintending labour, but all the difficult intellectual work of commerce

[1] "The Postulates of Political Economy," etc., published in his *Economic Studies* after his death.

besides, and are so little appreciated as they are, chiefly because they are a dumb class who are seldom equal to explaining to others the complex processes by which they estimate the wants of the community, and conceive how best to supply them. He maintained that capitalists are the great generals of commerce, that they plan its whole strategy, determine its tactics, direct its commissariat, and incur the danger of great defeats, as well as earn, if they do not always gain, the credit of great victories.

Here again is a new illustration of the light which Bagehot's keen insight into men, taken in connection with his own intimate understanding of the commercial field, brought into his economic studies. He brought life into these dry subjects from almost every side; for instance, in writing to the *Spectator*, many years ago, about the cliff scenery of Cornwall and especially about the pretty harbour of Boscastle, with its fierce sea and its two breakwaters—which leave a mere "Temple Bar" for the ships to get in at—a harbour of which he says that "the principal harbour of Liliput probably had just this look,"—he goes back in imagination at once to the condition of the country at the time when a great number of such petty harbours as these were essential to such trade as there was, and shows that at that time the Liverpool and London docks not only could not have been built for want of money, but would have been of no use if they had been built, since the auxiliary facilities which alone made such emporia useful did not exist. "Our old gentry built on their own estates as they could, and if their estates were near some wretched little haven, they were much pleased. The sea was the railway of those days. It brought, as it did to Ellangowan, in Dirk Hatteraick's time, brandy for the men and pinners for the women, to the loneliest of coast castles." It was by such vivid illustrations as this of the conditions of a very different commercial life from our own, that Bagehot lit up the "dismal science," till in his hands it became both picturesque and amusing.

Bagehot made two or three efforts to get into Parliament, but after an illness which he had in 1868 he deliberately abandoned the attempt, and held, I believe rightly, that his political judgment was all the sounder, as well as his health

the better, for a quieter life. Indeed, he used to say of himself that it would be very difficult for him to find a borough which would be willing to elect him its representative, because he was "between sizes in politics". Nevertheless in 1866 he was very nearly elected for Bridgewater, but was by no means pleased that he was so near success, for he stood to lose, not to win, in the hope that if he and his party were really quite pure, he might gain the seat on petition. He did his very best, indeed, to secure purity, though he failed. As a speaker, he did not often succeed. His voice had no great compass, and his manner was somewhat odd to ordinary hearers; but at Bridgewater he was completely at his ease, and his canvass and public speeches were decided successes. His examination, too, before the Commissioners sent down a year or two later to inquire into the corruption of Bridgewater was itself a great success. He not only entirely defeated the somewhat eagerly pressed efforts of one of the Commissioners, Mr. Anstey, to connect him with the bribery, but he drew a most amusing picture of the bribable electors whom he had seen only to shun. I will quote a little bit from the evidence he gave in reply to what Mr. Anstey probably regarded as home-thrusts:—

"42,018. (*Mr. Anstey*) Speaking from your experience of those streets, when you went down them canvassing, did any of the people say anything to you, or in your hearing, about money?—Yes, one, I recollect, standing at the door, who said, 'I won't vote for gentlefolks unless they do something for I. Gentlefolks do not come to I unless they want something of I, and I won't do nothing for gentlefolks, unless they do something for me.' Of course, I immediately retired out of that house.

"42,019. That man did not give you his promise?—I retired immediately; he stood in the doorway sideways, as these rustics do.

"42,020. Were there many such instances?—One or two, I remember. One suggested that I might have a place. I immediately retired from him.

"42,021. Did anybody of a better class than those voters, privately, of course, expostulate with you against your resolution to be pure?—No, nobody ever came to me at all.

"42,022. But those about you, did any of them say anything of this kind: 'Mr. Bagehot, you are quite wrong in putting purity of principles forward. It will not do if the other side bribes'?—I might have been told that I should be unsuccessful in the stream of conversation; many people

may have told me that; that is how I gathered that if the other side was impure and we were pure, I should be beaten.

"42, 023. Can you remember the names of any who told you that?—No, I cannot, but I daresay I was told by as many as twenty people, and we went upon that entire consideration."

To leave my subject without giving some idea of Bagehot's racy conversation would be a sin. He inherited this gift, I believe, in great measure from his mother, to those stimulating teaching in early life he probably owed also a great deal of his rapidity of thought. A lady who knew him well, says that one seldom asked him a question without his answer making you either think or laugh, or both think and laugh together. And this is the exact truth. His habitual phraseology was always vivid. He used to speak, for instance, of the minor people, the youths or admirers who collect around a considerable man, as his "fringe". It was he who invented the phrase "padding," to denote the secondary kind of article, not quite of the first merit, but with interest and value of its own, with which a judicious editor will fill up, perhaps, three-quarters of his review. If you asked him what he thought on a subject on which he did not happen to have read or thought at all, he would open his large eyes and say, "My mind is 'to let' on that subject, pray tell me what to think"; though you soon found that this might be easier attempted than done. He used to say banteringly to his mother, by way of putting her off at a time when she was anxious for him to marry: "A man's mother is his misfortune, but his wife is his fault". He told me once, at a time when the *Spectator* had perhaps been somewhat more eager or sanguine on political matters than he approved, that he always got his wife to "break" it to him on the Saturday morning, as he found it too much for his nerves to encounter its views without preparation. Then his familiar antitheses not unfrequently reminded me of Dickens's best touches in that line. He writes to a friend, "Tell—— that his policies went down in the *Colombo*, but were fished up again. *They are dirty, but valid.*" I remember asking him if he had enjoyed a particular dinner which he had rather expected to enjoy, but he replied, "No, the sherry was bad; tasted as if L—— had

dropped his h's into it". His practical illustrations, too, were full of wit. In his address to the Bridgewater constituency, on the occasion when he was defeated by eight votes, he criticised most happily the sort of bribery which ultimately resulted in the disfranchisement of the place.

"I can make allowance," he said, "for the poor voter; he is most likely ill-educated, certainly ill-off, and a little money is a nice treat to him. What he does is wrong, but it is intelligible. What I do not understand is the position of the rich, respectable, virtuous members of a party which countenances these things. They are like the man who stole stinking fish; they commit a crime, and they get no benefit."

But perhaps the best illustration I can give of his more sardonic humour was his remark to a friend who had a church in the grounds near his house:—"Ah, you've got the church in the grounds! I like that. It's well the tenants shouldn't be *quite* sure that the landlord's power stops with this world." And his more humorous exaggerations were very happy. I remember his saying of a man who was excessively fastidious in rejecting under-done meat, that he once sent away a cinder "because it was red"; and he confided gravely to an early friend that when he was in low spirits, it cheered him to go down to the bank, and dabble his hand in a heap of sovereigns.[1] But his talk had finer qualities than any of these. One of his most intimate friends—both in early life, and later in Lincoln's Inn—Mr. T. Smith Osler, writes to me of it thus:—

"As an instrument for arriving at truth, I never knew anything like a talk with Bagehot. It had just the quality which the farmers desiderated in the claret, of which they complained that though it was very nice, it brought them 'no forrader'; for Bagehot's conversation did get you forward, and at a most amazing pace. Several ingredients went to this; the foremost was his power of getting to the heart of the subject, taking you miles beyond your starting-point in a sentence, generally by dint of sinking to a deeper stratum. The next was his instantaneous appreciation of the bearing of everything you yourself said, making talk with him, as Roscoe

[1] Since the last edition of this work was published I have been reminded of more good sayings of my husband's. After a little accident, when his head was caught between a cart and a lamp-post in the city, he said: "Now I know what a nut feels like when it is going to be cracked". He used to say that "children's holidays are parents' schooltime," and "business is more amusing than pleasure".—E. BAGEHOT.

once remarked, 'like riding a horse with a perfect mouth'. But most unique of all was his power of keeping up animation without combat. I never knew a power of discussion, of co-operative investigation of truth, to approach to it. It was all stimulus, and yet no contest."

But I must have done; and, indeed, it is next to impossible to convey, even faintly, the impression of Bagehot's vivid and pungent conversation to any one who did not know him. It was full of youth, and yet had all the wisdom of a mature judgment in it. The last time we met, only five days before his death, I remarked on the vigour and youthfulness of his look, and told him he looked less like a contemporary of my own than one of a younger generation. In a pencil-note, the last I received from him, written from bed on the next day but one, he said: "I think you must have had the evil eye when you complimented me on my appearance. Ever since, I have been sickening, and am now in bed with a severe attack on the lungs." Indeed, well as he appeared to me, he had long had delicate health, and heart disease was the immediate cause of death. In spite of a heavy cold on his chest, he went down to his father's for his Easter visit the day after I last saw him, and he passed away painlessly in sleep on the 24th March, 1877, aged fifty-one. It was at Herds Hill, the pretty place west of the river Parret, that flows past Langport, which his grandfather had made some fifty years before, that he breathed his last. He had been carried thither as an infant to be present when the foundation stone was laid of the home which he was never to inherit; and now very few of his name survive. Bagehot's family is believed to be the only one remaining that has retained the old spelling of the name, as it appears in Doomsday Book, the modern form being Bagot. The Gloucestershire family of the same name, from whose stock they are supposed to have sprung, died out in the beginning of this century.

Not very many perhaps, outside Bagehot's own inner circle, will carry about with them that hidden pain, that burden of emptiness, inseparable from an image which has hitherto been one full of the suggestions of life and power, when that life and power are no longer to be found; for he was intimately

known only to the few. But those who do will hardly find again in this world a store of intellectual sympathy of so high a stamp, so wide in its range and so full of original and fresh suggestion, a judgment to lean on so real and so sincere, or a friend so frank and constant, with so vivid and tenacious a memory for the happy associations of a common past, and so generous in recognising the independent value of divergent convictions in the less pliant present.

1st November, 1878.

SECOND MEMOIR

BY RICHARD HOLT HUTTON.

(*From "Dictionary of National Biography".*)

WALTER BAGEHOT (1826-1877), an English economist and journalist, was born at Langport, in Somersetshire, on February 3, 1826; he died at the same place on March 24, 1877. For the last seventeen years of his life he edited the *Economist* newspaper, which was established by the late Right Hon. James Wilson during the Anti-Corn-Law agitation to represent Free-trade principles. Mr. Bagehot, who married in 1858 Mr. Wilson's eldest daughter, became in 1860, on the departure of his father-in-law to India as financial member of the Supreme Council, the editor and manager of that journal, and continued in that position till his death. He was a considerable authority in all questions of banking and finance, and consulted by Chancellors of the Exchequer of both parties on such matters at critical moments; but in the literary world he was even better known for his lively, vivid, and humorous criticisms. The works published during his own lifetime were: (1) *The English Constitution*, a book used at Oxford and in more than one of the North-American universities as a text-book on the subject; it has also been translated into German, French, and Italian. (2) *Physics and Politics*, an attempt to apply the principles of "natural selection," as explained by Mr. Darwin, to the explanation of the competitions and struggles of states; this volume, which is one of the International Scientific Series, has gone through four editions, and has been translated into six or seven different languages. (3) *Lombard Street*, now in its seventh edition; a study of the money market. He also published during his lifetime a

volume of essays, *Estimates of some Englishmen and Scotchmen*, now out of print; the whole of which, however, is included in either the two volumes of *Literary Studies* or the single volume of *Biographical Studies* published after his death. Besides these works, a volume on the *Depreciation of Silver*, which discusses the causes of the fall in silver between 1865 and 1875, and which was corrected for the press by himself, appeared immediately after his death in 1877; and a volume of essays on political economy, called *Economic Studies*, part of which had been published during his lifetime, while part was found among his papers, was published in 1880; Bagehot also published some essays on Parliamentary Reform, which were republished in 1883.

Langport, where Walter Bagehot was born and died, and with which he was connected both personally and by business ties during the whole of his life, is a little Somersetshire town with a "portreeve" of its own, and a characteristically sober constitutional history. So long ago as in the reign of Edward I., Langport begged to be relieved of the onerous duty of sending burgesses to the House of Commons; for at that time sending representatives to Parliament also involved remunerating them for their responsibilities, dangers, and expenses. This frugality and this rather ostentatious indifference to patriotic pretensions pleased Bagehot, who often boasted of it to his friends as a note of true political sobriety. It was at Langport that the Somersetshire Bank was founded by Mr. Samuel Stuckey in the eighteenth century; and with this bank Bagehot—whose father, Mr. Thomas Watson Bagehot, had married Mrs. Estlin, a niece of Mr. Stuckey's—became early connected, and he succeeded his father as Vice-Chairman of the Bank on the latter's retirement. Bagehot was sent to school in Bristol, where his mother's brother-in-law, Dr. Prichard, lived; and the influence of this relative, who wrote a book of great note on the *Races of Man*, is visible enough in Bagehot's own subsequent writings. In 1842 he entered University College, London, where he became a good mathematician under the late Professor De Morgan, and read very widely in all branches of general literature. Poetry, metaphysics, and history—of

which last study he never shirked what are usually thought the dry parts—were his favourite studies. The late Professor Long, who was a learned and accurate student of Roman law as well as of Roman history, had almost as much influence over his course of studies as Professor De Morgan himself. Bagehot took his B.A. degree in the University of London, with the mathematical scholarship, in 1846, and his M.A. degree in the same university, with the gold medal in intellectual and moral philosophy and political economy, in 1848. Then he began to read law, in the chambers first of Mr. Charles Hall (afterwards Vice-Chancellor Sir Charles Hall), and then of his friend Mr. Quain (afterwards the late Mr. Justice Quain), where he took a great liking for the art of special pleading, an art of which the lawyers have now abandoned at least the technical and scientific use. Bagehot always professed to regret greatly the abolition of special pleas. "The only thing I ever really knew," he once wrote, "was special pleading; and the moment I had learnt that, the law reformers botched and abolished it." Nevertheless, though called to the Bar in the autumn of 1852, he had already made up his mind not to pursue the law as his profession, but to join his father in his shipowning and banking business at Langport.

Before doing this, however, Bagehot spent some months in Paris, and happened to be living there at the time of the *Coup d'État* in December, 1851. He adopted keenly at the time the side of the Prince-President, and horrified some of his Liberal friends in London by addressing seven letters on the subject of the *Coup d'État* to a little weekly paper called the *Inquirer*. These letters have since been republished in an appendix to the first volume of his *Literary Studies*, which appeared after his death. They are letters of singular force and vivacity, though marked by more of that cynicism not uncommon in young men than any of his later writings. His great thesis was, that "stupidity" is the essential condition of political freedom, and that the French were a great deal too clever to be free. He held that the only security for people's doing their duty was "that they should not know anything else to do," and that the only guarantee for political

stability was, that they should be incapable of comprehending any other condition of political life than that to which they had been accustomed. It is easy to see that this notion, less paradoxically expressed, pervaded the essay on *Physics and Politics* conceived and written some twenty years later.

In 1852 Bagehot plunged into business; but he had always spare energy for literature and contributed first to the *Prospective Review*, and from 1855 onwards to the *National Review* (of which he was, throughout the existence of that quarterly, one of the editors), a series of essays which attracted very general attention by their brilliancy of style and lucidity of thought. Bagehot's great characteristic as a writer, whether on economic or literary subjects, was a very curious combination of dash and doubt; great vivacity in describing the superficial impressions produced on him by every subject-matter with which he was dealing, and great caution in yielding his mind to that superficial impression,—one might almost say great distrust of it, if only because he was always disposed to believe in the illusiveness of a first impression. His face reflected both phases of his mind: he had heavy black hair, flashing black eyes, a florid complexion, a lissom figure, and the look of high animal spirits; but he had also something of good-natured mockery in his glance, and his face reflected that habitual reserve of judgment which has been called "detachment" of mind,—in other words, a power of holding himself aloof from the influence of his own first impressions till he had checked and criticised them. Perhaps the essays which would best represent his peculiar genius are those on the "First Edinburgh Reviewers," on "Hartley Coleridge," and on "Bishop Butler". In those essays you get a glimpse of Bagehot's ultimate creed, such as you hardly reach in any of his more elaborate works.

Of these more elaborate works, probably the most adequate to his own conception was that on the *English Constitution*, in which he tries to get rid of all the formal theory of "checks and balances," and to show where the centre of power in the United Kingdom really is, and why the House of Commons is so much more powerful than other representative assemblies of

the same class. His view was, that the throne and the House of Lords are of the highest use, *not* in directly checking the House of Commons, but in affecting the wishes of the people as to what the Commons should do and what they should not do. He regarded "the dignified parts," or, as he also calls them, "the theatrical parts," of the Constitution, as useful chiefly to inspire in the people political confidence, to give a fuller significance to the sense of national unity, and to incline the people to look above themselves in education and social rank for the leaders by whom they would be guided. But the effective part of our Constitution is, in Bagehot's view, the very close unity between the executive government and the legislature produced by the machinery of the Cabinet, which is at once responsible for every administrative act, and for the legislation which enlarges or contracts or alters the scope of both the administration and the legislature. He contrasts at great length the fusion of the administrative and legislative functions in the English Cabinet with their formal and careful separation in the American Constitution, and he maintains that the House of Commons gains enormously in efficiency by its power of dismissing and virtually nominating the Cabinet; for that is the power, according to Bagehot, which gives so much importance to its debates, and which brings home to the electors their responsibility for sending to Parliament the right kind of men, and for making their dissatisfaction felt when their representatives do not speak and vote in the manner best calculated to lend weight to the party which they are pledged to support. Bagehot held that a representative assembly which, like the House of Representatives in the United States, cannot effect any great and notable change by its resolutions, is bound to be something of a cipher, and that the people will never care enough about what such an assembly does to take the pains requisite for selecting the best men. Nay, more, the best men themselves will not fix their ambition on becoming members of an assembly which exerts so little conspicuous influence on the course of national events. Bagehot was the first to bring out powerfully the paradox in "government by public meeting," as he called it, though he did not

live to see all the practical illustrations of that paradox which we have witnessed of late years since the rise of Mr. Parnell's Irish party into its present importance; but he had fully grasped the absolute impossibility of conducting such a government as ours unless the House of Commons, in whom all power is centred, is really docile to its leaders on both sides; and Bagehot held that nothing could make it docile to its leaders on both sides except a profound popular conviction that deference to leaders is of the very essence of parliamentary government.

Bagehot, though no admirer of the House of Lords, is on the whole a decided partisan of the House of Lords as a revising assembly; but he earnestly desired its reconstitution by the help of a considerable number of distinguished life peers. "Most lords," he said pithily, "are feeble and forlorn." The young peers are seldom aware that "business is really more agreeable than pleasure". Moreover, they are timorous creatures, who do not know when it is safe to resist an apparent current of popular opinion any more than they know when it is fatal to attempt to resist it. But with all this depreciation of the peers, Bagehot thought that the existence of the House of Lords tended to maintain the respect of the English people at large for the influence of wealth and culture in the community, and to prevent hungry and ignorant men from dictating foolish and revolutionary measures to hungry and ignorant crowds of followers. While the House of Lords remains, the people will be insensibly influenced by their liking for the wealth and splendour of the aristocracy; and this liking will act as a sedative to keep them from rash and violent measures, and to confine reform to the removal of clear and visible grievances.

Physics and Politics was described by Bagehot as "an attempt to apply the principles of natural selection and inheritance to political society". His general view was, that in early times the value of government chiefly consisted in the drill of a society into fixed habits, customs, preferences, and rules of its own; so as to subdue arbitrary personal caprice, and to create a common mind and character, a common groove of

thought and feeling. He held that for this purpose a good habit or rule was better than a bad habit or rule; but that even a bad habit or rule thoroughly impressed on the whole people, and inducing a common life, was better than a good habit or rule which had not bitten deeply into the life of a people and effectually moulded them in a single mould. The race of men who cannot help acting together if they would, are sure to get the better over any race whose combination for co-operative actions is loose and imperfect; hence his preference for what he called "political stupidity"—the dull, fixed habit of acting all in one way, as the English do—to the sprightly divergences and differences of opinion which make it so difficult for the French to know what they really wish, or whether they have any wish in common by which the masses are profoundly affected. In the same way Bagehot explained, of course, the triumph of Rome over Greece and other indifferently welded, though cleverer and more reflective communities. He maintained, however, that this drill may be *too* effective, may go too far, and that when it does so we have cases of what he called "arrested civilisations". Such an arrested civilisation we have in China, where the common drill completely trampled out that disposition for cautious criticism and review of national prejudices, which ought to come sooner or later if there is ever to be an age of progress and discussion. Bagehot held that in our own day that respect for action which was characteristic of the times when action was needed to form and mould the national character, is excessive. He thought that reserve of judgment, and especially reserve of resolve, is not half common enough; men are over-eager to be doing what they are not sure of approving even when they have done it; the military instincts inherited from the age of drill precipitate us into all sorts of premature action, where we really want discussion, and suspense of judgment till discussion has done its perfect work. *Physics and Politics* is a very remarkable illustration of the dread of eagerness inspired by the doubts of a reflective mind. The eager nations, he held, had had their day; the time for deliberating, hesitating, and slowly resolving nations had arrived.

As an economist Bagehot belonged decidedly to the Ricardo school; but he held that the Ricardo political economy does not apply to any country in which the larger commerce and the system of open competition have not been more or less introduced. He denied altogether, for instance, that in such a country as India it is true that capital flows towards any occupation in which a high rate of profit is to be made, or that the Ricardo theory of rent is true in India. He regarded political economy as a science of tendencies only, these tendencies being approximately true in countries like England, though not more than approximately true even there, while in the older world they are absolutely invisible.

Bagehot was one of the best conversers of his day. He was not only vivid, witty, and always apt to strike a light in conversation, but he helped in every real effort to get at the truth, with a unique and rare power of lucid statement. One of his friends said of him:—"I never knew a power of discussion, of co-operative investigation of truth, to approach to" his. "It was all stimulus, and yet no contest."

EDITOR'S PREFACE.

(*Portion of a Preface written by Forrest Morgan for an edition of Walter Bagehot's works which was published in America.*)

THAT no editor has any business to rewrite a line or change a substantive word of his author's text is self-evident; and that the substitution of any language of mine for that of Walter Bagehot would be the summit of impertinence and presumptuous folly is equally evident. What readers wish to know and have a right to know is, what Bagehot said, not what his editor thinks he ought to have said. Therefore, in no case have I meddled with the structure of a sentence in any way; in a few cases I have called attention to the entanglement of the syntax, but I have not even attempted to mend such atrocities as "The period at which the likeness was attempted to be taken" (beginning of the *English Constitution*), or other like gems of English. But I do not think even editorial fidelity or reverence for the memory of a great man (and I cannot better gauge my own for Walter Bagehot than by saying that I believe this edition is a higher service to the public than any original work I could do) binds me to allow a plural noun to remain coupled with a singular verb (or *vice versa*), or a singular pronoun in one clause set off against a plural one in the following like clause, or a present and a past tense similarly yoked together in a most discordant union,—merely because the great man did not read his proofs and a patent slip of the pen remained uncorrected. I do not believe even he, little as he cared for such things, would wish to have all the rags and tatters of his haste and slovenliness scrupulously saved up and exhibited to posterity, any more

than a public speaker would care to have a phonograph record an accidental hiccough; nor do I believe that even the most devoted admirers of Bagehot, to whom every word is worth preserving as instinct with the flavour of that rich mind (among whom I count myself), care to have their senses jarred upon by such purely accidental slips. Nevertheless, I recognise the right of the public to know just what their author wrote and how he left his text; that he wrote carelessly and did not read his proofs is in itself an item of interest in comprehending him. And still more, I owe both to them and to myself to give the minutest information just how far I have tampered with the text, so that they may not fear that they are reading a mangled and wantonly altered version, and I may not be suspected of meddling with his language. I have therefore kept a scrupulous account of all the changes, even the minutest (except such as are made by the insertion of words or letters,—in which case the additions are invariably put in brackets,—or by foot-notes), and give them in a separate table. By this means, any one who finds comfort in knowing how badly his author could write can do so, and where no notice is given may be sure he is reading Bagehot undefiled.

That all extracts in foreign languages are translated, ought to be more a matter of course than it is: in anything designed for wide popular reading, neglect to do so is either laziness or swagger. The object being that all readers shall have the fullest understanding and enjoyment with the least friction, it is absurd to lock up any portion out of the reach of four-fifths of them; and it is not the business either of a writer or an editor to impose penalties for defective education. There is of course one palpable exception to this,—where an extract is cited as a sample of style instead of matter; which in general excludes translation of all poetry as well as of some prose. But curiously enough, not a single quotation of Bagehot's from any foreign author is given to illustrate style: even the verses from Æschylus in the essay on Shelley are cited only as an instance of classic bareness of decoration, and he quotes poems from Béranger only to illustrate that poet's philosophy of life.

The worst translation possible, therefore, would be better than none.

It will be noticed that I have refrained almost wholly from argumentative notes; even the few which seem such turn really upon questions of fact. It is a gross wrong to an author to make his popularity float criticism of himself which could not gain a hearing if published separately, in such intimate union with the text that it cannot be escaped; and nothing is more annoying to a reader than to be incessantly teased with the information that the editor, for whom he does not care, differs from the author, for whom he does care. There are scores of points on which I think Bagehot's opinion could be contested or limited, some of them provoking in their perversity; but I have not forced the reader even to take the trouble of skipping an argument on the subject.

It ought not to be necessary, but to some it will be, to disclaim any overweening notion of the value of these or any corrections. Of course Bagehot's greatness is not affected by such trifles: his thought and his wit, the value of his matter and the charm of his style, did not have to wait for this before delighting the world, and so far as either the use or the pleasure of his works is concerned, they would be substantially as well without it. But then, the same thing may be said of every other great author, whom nevertheless it is always thought a worthy service to present in as fair and clear a shape as possible. Such work is, to use a familiar comparison, only "picking vermin off a lion's skin;" but for my own part I prefer a clean lion to a dirty one, and must not be accused of forgetting that he is a lion because I perform the service thoroughly,—on the contrary, but for my hearty admiration for him it would not have been undertaken. Once for all, Walter Bagehot's writings have been to me for many years one of the choicest of intellectual luxuries, and a valued store of sound thought and mental stimulation, and full appreciation of these must be held as implied in any difference of opinion I express; but even an admired master and teacher is not an idol to be uncritically worshipped.

Lastly, despite all the care and labour expended on the work, I know well that blunders will probably be found in it by sharp-eyed specialists, each with more time for a few items than the editor has had for the whole. Very likely they will vindicate Bagehot's accuracy on some points; not impossibly I have made some fresh errors in trying to correct his. I cannot escape or forestall such criticism, and would not if I could,—the public is entitled to know the truth on every point; nor shall I complain of any just castigation for errors or bad judgment. I ask only for the fair allowance due one who has made heavy personal sacrifices of leisure, health, and chosen pursuits, to carry through an important work which better equipped and less burdened men were not likely to undertake.

The appreciative essays on Bagehot published since his death—Mr. Hutton's memoirs, Mr. Giffen's reminiscences in the *Fortnightly*, the acute comments of Professors Walker and Dicey in the *Nation*, and others—have so fully set forth his titles to praise, that further comment involves an awkward dilemma. To repeat the eulogies would be tedious; yet to give nothing but hostile criticism would grossly distort the perspective both of Bagehot and myself, and stultify both my admiration and my work. The hasty reader might think, "If Bagehot is wrong in both his attitude and his arguments, it is a waste of time to read him, and he cannot deserve so much laudation". Of course this would be bad reasoning even if the postulate were wholly true: like all first-rate minds, Bagehot is more instructive and better worth reading when he is wrong than when he is right, because the wrong is sure to be almost right and the truth on its side neglected; and for myself, I take refuge in his own dictum that it is not a critic's business to be thankful. Some new things, however, are still left me to say in his praise, to maintain a tolerable balance; but I have no intention of cataloguing all the items I specially admire or disapprove, or of anything more than supplementing the articles above mentioned by a few detached observations.

It will seem absurd to compare Bagehot with Coleridge, and there certainly was little enough resemblance in life or writings; but the chief work of both was the same,—to uproot the stubborn idea that nothing except what one is used to has any "case". Bagehot harps upon the fact that everything has a case; that institutions and practices are tools to do certain work vital to a society, and cannot be passed upon till we know its needs; and that those needs may demand alternate acceptance and rejection of given institutions, according as discipline is paralysing progress or progress weakening discipline. He carries this to the very root, evidently taking keen pleasure in making out an excellent case for isolation, for persecution, for slavery, for State regulation of everything from religion to prices, for even the most paralysing politico-religious despotism, —in short, for everything most hateful to the modern spirit and most mischievous in modern society; he makes it an arguable point whether his own arguments for toleration should be tolerated; he leaves prejudice in favour of any institution in the abstract not a leg to stand on. As a principle of immediate political action, Mr. Hutton is unquestionably right in thinking this teaching worse than useless; but as a piece of analysis to clarify the minds of the intellectual class in the study of events and institutions, to sober sectarian zeal and infuse caution into the framers of political elysiums, its value can hardly be overrated.

Physics and Politics, of which the above is the vital essence, seems to me his masterpiece, and not even yet rated at its true value. Both its size and its style, though important merits, are drawbacks to its gaining reverence: men will not believe that so small a book can be a great reservoir of new truth, or that one so easy to understand can be a great work of science. Yet after subtracting all its heavy debt to Darwin and Wallace, Spencer and Maine, Tylor and Lubbock, and all the other scientific and institutional research of his time, it remains one of the few epoch-making books of the century: the perspective of time may perhaps leave this and the *Origin of Species* standing out as having given us clearest knowledge of the springs of

change and progress in the world,—this doing for human society what that did for organic life. And in one respect Bagehot's work, though inspired by the other, is the more striking,—it is so short. It is hardly more than a pamphlet,—one can read it in an evening: yet it contains a mass of ideas which could be instructively expanded into several large volumes; and I do not know of any work which is a master-key to so many locks, and supplies the formula for so many knotty historical problems. Most important is the terrible clearness with which he brings out the lack of any necessary connection between the interests of the individual and those of the society (that is, the individuals of the future), and their direct antagonism often for ages; this fact alone is the source of half the tragedy of the world. But it makes the book a profoundly saddening one, as anything must be which recalls the infinite helplessness of human endeavour against the mighty forces of whose orbits we can hardly see the curve in thousands of years; one must have little imagination not to be impressed by it as by a great melancholy epic. It shows also (though Bagehot evidently did not perceive it) that "the fools being in the right" and the intelligent thought of a society wrong half the time results from natural law,—from the fact that ultimate benefit through the strengthening of the society involves vast immediate evils, the popular instinct feeling only the former and the cultivated thought perceiving only the latter; and consequently disproves his own political creed that a democratic government cannot be as good as a "deferential" one. In fact, that theory dissolves into a tissue of fallacies and verbal quibbles as soon as one begins to analyse it.

The leading theories of the book are obviously true. The two great factors, imitation and persecution, though on the surface exactly opposed, spring in fact from a single root, the pride of personality, the result of the very fact of conscious existence. Imitation is the attempt of an individual to raise itself to an equality of accomplishment with every other: supposed inferiors are not imitated. Persecution is nature's protest against unstable equilibrium, and effort to make it

stable,—that is, to avoid the unsettling of the principles or feelings an individuality acts on, or in other words, injuries to its pride. It is in fact an effort to bar from its knowledge all things inconsistent with the permanency of its immediate state of feeling; and the intensity of the desire or of its action does not and cannot diminish,—it is as strong now in the most civilised societies as it was in the Stone Age. The only amelioration is, that to an ever greater extent a flux of details is found to involve none of guiding principles, and to be a *sine qua non* of needful business; so more and more of them are reluctantly left to free choice. But how hateful this tolerance is to men's hearts, how spontaneous the impulse of persecution (or, less harshly, enforcing conformity), how gladly they set up some standard (it does not much matter what) in the pettiest things and force every one to act *alike*, is manifest wherever there is power either to coerce others or to get away from them. Parents will not let a child prepare its food in its own way, even when it would do no harm; men will hoot another for wearing a suit whose colour is (for no assignable cause) held inappropriate to the season; and the tyranny of fashion among women (who simply represent the conservative forces at their strongest) needs no exposition. "Society" is ruled by codes more microscopic, despotic, and inflexible than any ever enforced on savages: the clothes to be worn, the ceremonies to be performed, the manner of eating, the minutest details of conduct, are prescribed without latitude or appeal. The same feeling makes people shun like the plague the risk of discovering new truth on the main theories of life, as politics and religion: men choose their associates, their newspapers, their very societies of intellectual research, to reinforce their confidence in themselves, not to shake it. Life would not be endurable if one never felt sure from day to day whether the postulates on which he based his conduct were true. Even the principle of corporate liability for offences to the gods, to which Bagehot assigns the largest share in enforcing unity of action, must have found its chief scope through this; for things directly esteemed unlucky from special events

(absurdly numerous as they seem to us) can have borne but a small proportion to the mass of neutral acts, which must have been organised into a systematic drill through the fact that anything disagreeable (or what is the same thing, unfamiliar) to themselves was of course assumed disagreeable to their gods too, and soon came under a permanent religious ban. I am inclined also to think that his theory of the way the "cake of custom" came to be broken is more ingenious than valid: the progress of the world cannot have been left to the pure accident of a special polity. It is much more likely that it resulted from the simultaneous growth of knowledge, cupidity, and business necessity,—through the mixture of peoples, conquest, and commerce,—and would have occurred if the "chief, old men, and multitude" system had never grown up. Here again the influence of old prepossessions is very visible: aristocracy having in fact existed in all progressive societies, it is assumed that but for its rise the world could never have emerged from savagery—which is incredible.

The economic worth or novelty of *Economic Studies* I am not competent to estimate; but that feature is not to me its chief interest, and I doubt if it is its chief value, which is rather historic and social. The book is mainly a re-survey of the ground traversed in *Physics and Politics*, with which it is identical in aim in a more limited sphere,—to prove that modern advantages were ancient ruin, and modern axioms ancient untruths. It buttresses the same points with many new illustrations and expositions; and contains besides a mass of the nicest and shrewdest observations on modern trade and society, full of truth and suggestiveness. That it was left a fragment is a very great loss to the world; had it been finished, Mr. Giffen's account of his discussions with his colleague gives us reason to believe that it would have touched on all the moral elements in trade which so deflect men from the line of mere pecuniary interest.

Regarding the *English Constitution*, appreciation of its immense merits must be taken for granted; praising it is as

superfluous as praising Shakespeare. Every student knows that it has revolutionised the fashion of writing on its subject, that its classifications of governments are accepted commonplaces, that it is the leading authority in its own field and a valued store of general political thought. As an analysis of the English system and an essay on comparative constitutions, it will not lose its value; as a treatise on the best form of constitution and a manual of advice for foreigners, it is a monument of the futility of such work, for the course of events since his death seems sardonically designed for the express purpose of making a wreck of it. The last decade has done more than the previous four to compel a total recasting of much political speculation based at once on long experience and seemingly unassailable theory. In this country some apparent axioms, further confirmed by the test of ninety years, have been upset by that of a hundred; in France, recent history has justified Bagehot's theory as a philosopher by stultifying his conclusions as an Englishman, and proving his governmental prescription to be quackery as a panacea; in his own country some of the leaders of thought are looking wistfully toward the conservatism of our system as an improvement on the unfettered democracy of theirs,—an ironical commentary on his book. These changes, too, are of the most opposite sorts, as might be expected,—the characteristic evils of each system developing until they become well-nigh intolerable and demand an infusion of the other for a remedy. In this country we need some elements at least of the cabinet system, for the sake of political education, party responsibility, direct executive power, and the ability to prevent the creation of a permanent oligarchy through the interests and fears of an army of office-holders. In France there is evident need of an executive with power to carry on the government for a certain time in defiance of faction. In England the question is so bound up with the tremendous problems now at hand, and these are so involved and far-reaching, that reserve of judgment is both modesty and common-sense; but the difference in the situation from that of a few years ago is so

great that the rather complacent tone of the book already grates on one as being decidedly out of place, and even gives it an unjust appearance of shallowness. Part of the change had come before his death: the difference in tone between the first edition and the introduction to the second is nearly as great as between the views of trade given by a merchant when prospering and when menaced with bankruptcy.

And this leads naturally to his utterances on American subjects. These were in general so fair, often so weighty and valuable, and always so different in kind from the ignorant ill-will toward anything foreign in which every national press is steeped, that we can feel no irritation even where his judgment is most severe. Besides, he confined his criticisms mainly to positive institutions, which can be modified at will; and did little carping at social facts, which is scarcely more than a waste of breath even from a native and quite that from a foreigner,—such facts not being conscious creations but instinctive embodiments of social necessities, which adjust themselves as needed and which their very creators are powerless to change. It would be silly, therefore, to resent the little streaks of complacent John-Bullism which lurked even in that least insular of minds; but I confess to a touch of malicious satisfaction in this proof that he was human and an Englishman. Of this sort is the remark, in the most permanently delicious passage he ever wrote (that on early reading in the essay on Gibbon), "Catch an American of thirty; tell him about the battle of Marathon," etc. What he supposed the historical teaching in American colleges[1] to consist of, it is impossible to say; apparently, analyses of the battle of New Orleans, and panegyrics on Sam Houston and Davy Crockett. But all literature may be challenged to furnish anything equal in absurdity to the grave

[1] Of course comparisons of this sort must be made between like classes: it is absurd to contrast the educated few of one country with the rough mass of another, and I doubt if the bulk of Yorkshire farmers or Lancashire mill-hands would find any magic in the name of Miltiades or Leonidas.

deliverance in *Physics and Politics*, that "A Shelley in New England could hardly have lived, *and a race of Shelleys would have been impossible*". Shelley would have been no whit more out of key with the community than were Alcott and Thoreau, and he could not well have received less sympathy here than he did at home; and in what quarter or epoch of the world since the Silurian age "a race of Shelleys" would have been possible, defies imagination,—it certainly was not England in 1800+. It is hard to believe that Bagehot did not have some intelligible thought in writing this piece of sublimated nonsense, but I cannot form the least idea what.

These of course are trifles; but in both the great aspects of our system, the political and the social, he omits or mistakes essential facts. To be sure, in the social aspect he bases a gloomy view of the future on a much too complimentary view of the present; but it must have struck so impartial a seeker after truth as a *very* remarkable and gratifying coincidence, that both the political and the social system of his own country should be the best in the world, not only for present happiness but for future elevation.

First, politically. The *English Constitution* is ostensibly not a brief for that system, but a judicial work on comparative constitutions; and from such a standpoint it is a serious flaw that he ignores wholly the factor of stability, to which everywhere else he attaches supreme value. All progress and even good government must be sacrificed if necessary to keep the political fabric together, is the entire *raison d'être* of the *Letters on the Coup d'État*"; if a government cannot keep itself alive, it makes no difference how good it is. Much of *Physics and Politics* and *Economic Studies* rests on the same thesis: unity of action is of such prime importance to the world that a disciplined band of semi-barbarians often crushes out an advanced but loose-knit society; the same idea recurs again and again in his other writings. Yet when he contrasts the English with the American system, national feeling triumphs over abstract philosophy, with the result of exactly reversing the relations of the two systems. The evident fact is, that the nominal aristocracy of England is really an unchecked democracy,

committing the fate of the polity at every moment, through the cabinet system and the lack of a written constitution, to the crude emotions of the mass ; while the nominal democracy of America is so curbed by its written Constitution and fixed executive terms, accessory institutions, and the division of power between national, State, and municipal bodies, that its working is even ultra-conservative. Nor is it true, as he was wont to argue in the *Economist*, that such barriers are only useless irritations, and are always broken through as soon as the people are really excited. The failure of Johnson's impeachment is one proof to the contrary ; and though the Supreme Court could be swamped and packed, that process cannot be indefinitely repeated. On the whole, the curbs curb, —and a good deal too much ; for I must not be understood as objecting much to what he says, but only to what he does not say. His positive criticisms are mainly of the highest value and justice, and the severest ones are the truest. The dangers and degradations and follies, the scanting of decent political thought and the outlawry of independent political thinkers, the riot of low minds and coarse natures in authority for which they have no fitness, the lowering into the mud of the standards of political cleanliness, inevitable to such a polity, are so far from being overstated that his expressions are tame beside the facts. My contention is, that every point he makes in favour of the English system—and his arguments are of immense weight and often unanswerable—is an equal point in favour of pure democracy and against his own distrust of the people, by showing that the freer they are left to their own will the better they manage. Nothing can be truer than that a cabinet system keeps the political education of the masses at the highest pitch, and that one like ours injuriously stints it. But thoroughness of political education results from directness of political power ; and while a champion of democracy is perfectly consistent in thinking this an advantage and favouring cabinet government, its advocacy by Bagehot on that express ground presents the grotesque spectacle of a great thinker employing his best powers in confuting his own creed. And it is certainly not proved that the hard and fast line he draws between the two systems

is inevitable: that free countries are shut down for ever to a choice between two evils, neither of which can be lessened; that they must take either a pure cabinet system, with the throttle valve always under the hand of the mob, or a pure presidential system, with irresistible party power yet no party responsibility, little direct power of the executive for good and limitless indirect power for mischief, and the bread of many thousands of families at once a bribe and a threat to turn elections into a farce. I believe that the two can be made in some measure to work together; and if either finally absorbed the other, it would be the surest possible proof that the survivor was best fitted to the needs of the country.

His theory of the social effects of democracy is wildly imaginary, and very diverting to an American. He actually assumes that the theory of democratic social equality is realised as a fact, and that bootblacks and porters are the social equals (or at least think themselves so and act as if they were) of the rich and the "old families"; and bases on this assumption a highly complacent thesis of the great superiority of English society, as one of "removable inequalities," which is one of the most elaborately absurd pieces of social speculation ever published. In the first place, his facts are all wrong. Social equality is a chimera anyway, and in few sections of the earth is there less either of the practice or the theory than in the older cities of the United States. As to the practice, nowhere do a larger part of the people devote more of their faculties, from youth to old age, with strenuous energy and anxious care, to the sole task of preventing other people from associating with them,—their successes and failures in this useful vocation make no small part of the fun of the numerous comic papers; society is stratified by money, family connections, and occupation, here as everywhere, and England itself cannot surpass the minuteness of gradations and the subtlety of distinctions. As to the theory, not only is it practically absent from current talk or thought (except as an occasional inspiration to quell an English tourist), but I do not believe any other literature has so large a body of writing of all forms—essays, novels, plays, etc. —devoted to a conscious propaganda of the snob theory of life

in all its details, as America can show in the last two decades, —employing every weapon from direct argument to spiteful sneers and calm assumption, and in every tone from light ridicule to rancorous bitterness. The reaction from the earlier democratic theories has been even violent: in the perception that the equality so coveted and eulogised is neither possible nor best, a host of writers revel in kicking and insulting it, and glorifying the opposite and worse extreme which does not recognise personal qualities as a factor in social estimates at all. After reading some novels of the past few years, one thinks of the Jacobin Clubs of 1794 with a kindlier feeling. These writers are by no means consistent in detail,—part of them urging that the common herd may perhaps make something of their successors by tearful self-abasement of themselves, while others denounce them for wishing to be better than God made them, and for not making servant-girls of their daughters; and the same author sometimes implying in one work that wealth without grandfathers is naught, and in another that the Admirable Crichton himself without a large fortune would not be a proper *parti:* but they have one common aim,—to teach that the first duty of all who would be socially saved is to despise and avoid as large a part of the human race as possible. A society like this is in no lack of inequalities of any sort to furnish a stimulus to struggle, an incentive to every sort of ambition from the basest to the noblest, a motive to acquire everything tangible and intangible to be got by man. And on the other hand, the inequalities of the vast mass of English society are of exactly the same sort, and are "removable" only by just the same means,—namely, visible expenditure, dust-licking, patience, and careful imitation of the accepted social leaders. The very essence of Du Maurier's endless satire is, that the untitled English do not have their classes labelled, and that the scramble to acquire a better standing, and the premium on pretending to a better standard than one has, give rein to some of the meanest passions of human nature; brains and character count for as much or as little in one society as in the other; there is nothing more essentially ennobling in trying to get rich enough to be made a baronet or a lord, than

in trying to get rich enough to be invited to the Jones's receptions or to refuse to invite them to your own; and aping the manners of lords is no more refining than aping those of the "first families" of Boston, New York, or Virginia. Bagehot's contention, in fact, reduces to two points: that there being several labelled ranks of society makes the boundaries of classes among the unlabelled one less doubtful; and that the effort to get out of the latter into the former is more improving than the effort to climb from one of the latter to another,—both which need only statement for disproof. Plainly enough, he built an ingenious theory on the names aristocracy and democracy, without comparing either with facts.

The biographical papers vary much in merit; but the best of them are of the very first rank, among not only his writings but all writings of the kind. Like the literary essays, they are at once helped and harmed by his passion for making the facts support a theory; but the benefit is much greater than the injury. They have two special merits in great strength: they are wonderfully vivid in portrayal of character,—the subjects stand out like silhouettes, and one knows them almost like the hero of a novel; and they present the important political features of the times with stereoscopic and unforgettable clearness. In these respects he far surpassed the most famous master in this line, Lord Macaulay. One cannot form nearly so full and just an idea of the younger Pitt's equipment, or so clear an image of his personality, from Macaulay's biography as from Bagehot's; and the insight into the problems of Queen Anne's time to be gained from the "War of the Succession" is very superficial compared with that given by the masterly exposition in Bagehot's Bolingbroke. Bagehot, too, has an unequalled skill in so stating his facts and his deductions as to force one to remember them,—the highest triumph of a literary style. A careless person may read an essay of Macaulay's with great delight, carry away a wealth of glittering sentences, and be absolutely unable to remember the course or connection of events,—the uniform brilliancy destroying the perspective and leaving nothing salient for the mind to grasp; but nobody who reads one of Bagehot's

historical papers can lose the clue to the politics of the time any more than he can forget his name.

The sketch of his father-in-law, Mr. Wilson, it would be unfair to judge by pure abstract standards. Its chief interest to me is its unconscious picture of the complacent provinciality, the application of their local standards to everything in the world, which has made the English Government and many of the most high-minded and well-meaning English officials hated by every subject people in every age. Mr. Wilson was an able, upright, and utterly conscientious public man; he never had a doubt that the administrative machinery of England was the best possible for any country or people, that the taxes ought to be raised everywhere just as they were raised in England, that the way anything was done in England was the way it should be done everywhere; he was made financial dictator of India, and proceeded to duplicate the English system there, in unruffled disregard both of the people and of the resident English officials who declared it unsuitable to the country: and his biographer, who has devoted his best powers elsewhere to exposing the folly of abstract systems, calmly tells us that if it did not work well it was the people's own fault, and they must not complain if the Government put on the screws harder. Both may have been entirely right—but it is all very English, and an excellent object lesson.

The literary essays are unfailingly charming, and exhibit Bagehot's wit and freshness of view and keenness of insight, and the wide scope of his thought, more thoroughly than any other of his writings; and their criticism is often of the highest value. Yet I do not rate them his best. They have the merit and the defect of a consistent purpose,—a central theory which the details are marshalled to support. The merit is, that it makes them worth writing at all; the defect, that the theory may be wrong or incomplete, and the facts garbled to make out a case for it. For example, Macaulay's character and views are both distorted to round out Bagehot's theory of the literary temperament and its effects. The theory is only half true to begin with: the shrinking from life and preference for books which he attributes to an unsensitive disposition is often enough the

result of the exact reverse,—an over-sensitive one, like a flayed man, which makes it hard to distinguish impressions because all hurt alike; Southey, the extreme type of the book man, exemplifies this. Macaulay could not have been the able administrator and effective parliamentary speaker he was, without much more capacity to see life and men with his own eyes than Bagehot allows him; and how any one can read the *Notes on the Indian Penal Code* and still maintain that Macaulay's residence in India taught him nothing, I cannot comprehend. And his judgment of the Puritans is grossly perverted: he, and not Carlyle, was the first to sweep away the current view that they were canting hypocrites whose religion makes their success harder instead of easier to understand; and both in the essays and in the *History of England* he attributes their power directly to their religious fervour,—his lack of sympathy with which makes his hearty appreciation of its effects all the more striking a proof of his intellectual acuteness. Bagehot more than atones for this, however, by a signal service to Macaulay's repute in pointing out that the vulgar cant which rates him as a mere windy rhetorician is the exact reverse of the truth, and that the source of his merits and defects alike was a hard unspiritual common-sense.

The miscellaneous nature of the essays was a great advantage to a shrewd and humorous mind like his, by not exacting a petty surface consistency: he could utter all sorts of contradictory or complementary half-truths, shoot the shafts of his wit at friend and foe alike, and gibe at all classes of society as their ridiculous aspects came into view. Any one dull enough to take all his fleers for cold and final judgments, and try to weave them into a consistent whole, would have a worse task than Michael Scott's devils. He seems to me to have had also, as such a mind often has, a strong element of sheer perversity. One of his chief delights—by a reactionary sympathy rather odd in a great thinker and literary man, and specially so in him as contrary to his whole theory of modern society—was to magnify the active and belittle the intellectual temperament; he is never tired of glorifying fox-hunters and youths who hate study, and sneering at the intellectual class, from Euclid and

Newton, Macaulay and Mackintosh, to college tutors and impotent *littérateurs*. Yet in *Physics and Politics*, where his serious purpose curbs his reckless wit, he credits the "pale preliminary students" with the main share in developing civilisation; and in a remarkable passage makes the active temperament a serious drawback and evil temptation in modern life, and the increase of thoughtful quiet our great desideratum. The natural deduction would be, that the best work has been done by the best men, and that a class we need to have multiplied is a superior class. Surely it is an exception to everything else in the universe if the small body of pioneers have been the weakest part of the race, if the scarcest mental qualities are the least valuable, if the world's admiration is given to those who as a whole do not deserve it, if the fortunes of the world have depended and still depend on the fibreless and the purblind. Like others, Bagehot sometimes preferred one-sided wit to judicial truth. After this, it will seem like wanton paradox to say that I think his utterances on this point much more valuable and better worth heeding than most of those on the other side; but it is not. We hear quite enough of the other, and feeble recluse literary talent gets fully as much reverence as it earns; it is very wholesome to have it shrunk a little by a cold shower-bath of mockery, and a practical experience of life set up as the inexorable condition of having anything to say worth listening to. It is exaggerated, of course, but one must exaggerate to gain a hearing,—refined truth is not exciting; and there is no truer or weightier remark than Bagehot's that literature is so comparatively sterile because "so few people that can write know anything".

His own *Lombard Street* is a splendid material argument of the above position: as he says, most business men cannot write, most writers know nothing of business, therefore most writing about business is either unreadable or untrue; he devoted the highest literary talent to the theme of his daily business, and has produced a book as solid as a market report and more charming than a novel. It is one of the marvels of literature. There has rarely been such an example of the triumph of style over matter,—Macaulay himself never suc-

ceeded in giving more exhaustless charm to things which few can make readable at all; and it is a striking example of his great faculty of illuminating every question by illustrations from the unlikeliest sources. There is a fascination about it surpassing that of any other of his writings: its luminous, easy, half-playful "business talk" is irresistibly captivating, and after reading it a hundred times, I cannot pick it up without reading a good share of it again. As to the validity of its criticisms or advice on banking matters, I know nothing and shall say nothing. The only strong review of the book was by Professor Bonamy Price in *Fraser's;* and while some of the professor's observations are highly acute and valuable, one grudges to admit any merit at all in the article on account of its virulent bitterness of tone, the extreme opposite to that of the book reviewed. The business man discusses his subject like a gentleman, and the professor like a termagant,—nothing new in controversies; and the latter becomes ponderously sarcastic with rage every time he thinks of the "insult" offered to the management of the Bank of England by the suggestions for bettering it,—something the author probably never dreamed of and the public certainly never noticed. Even a much smaller man is entitled to say, without committing the stupendous folly of expressing an opinion on the Bank case, that Professor Price's assault on Bagehot for confusion of technical terms is overcaptious (the passage on this subject in the "Transferability of Capital" is evidently intended as an answer to it); that some of his assertions are simply angry reiterations, without fresh argument, of points Bagehot has contested; that others attack things in one part of the book which are cleared up in another part; and that nothing in it warrants any such amount of bad temper. Moreover, his position on the subject of panics, considered as a reply to Bagehot, makes one open his eyes very wide: it is the same thing in essence as telling the corpse of a man dead from fright that since all his organs are sound, he has no business to be dead, and in point of fact is not dead, and could perfectly well go on living if he chose. The obvious answer is, that none the less he *is* dead. If a panic results in reducing a host of merchants to bankruptcy and small salaries,

in reducing thousands of families from affluence to poverty, in destroying elegant homes and sending their inmates to tenements, in depriving boys of university educations and girls of social chances, it is a tremendous misfortune, even though, as Professor Price maintains, not a particle of actual capital is lost; it is to be averted by every possible means; and it is not presumptuous to say that Bagehot's preventives are much sounder than Professor Price's, which seem to consist of telling people that if they would have sense enough not to be scared they would not be harmed. This is of course true, but also worthless; it is excellent as general teaching, but childish in any particular crisis: and if business is based on a probability of facts instead of directly on the facts, it is inevitable that an apparent failure of the probability should produce for the time the same result as an actual failure of the facts. But all this is beside the vital qualities of *Lombard Street;* its merits or defects as a banker's manual will have nothing to do with its immortality, for sooner or later its use in that capacity must pass away. It will live as a picture, not as a text-book; ages after the London of our time is as extinct as the Athens of Pericles, it will be read with delight as incomparably the best description of that London's business essence that anywhere exists.

Of the *Articles on the Depreciation of Silver* it must be said that the course of events has not thus far supported their thesis. It seems most probable that the increased use of tools of credit —which is the same thing as the growth of mutual confidence, bred by civilisation and commerce—has permanently lessened the needful stock of coin, and that consequently the use and value of the bulkier metal have started on a downward road which can never ascend. If the great silver-using countries develop increased trade, they will probably use less silver instead of more, simply drawing more bills. But aside from their main purpose, the articles contain much admirable exposition of trade, facts, and principles, richly worth studying.

Of the *Letters on the French Coup d'Ètat*, there is not much to add to what Mr. Hutton and others have said. They are perennially entertaining and wholesome reading, full of racy wit and capital argument; they contain the essence of all his

political philosophy, and he swerved very little from their main lines; and with all their limitations and perversities, they would be an invaluable manual for our politicians and legislators,—their faults are too opposed to our rooted instincts to do the smallest harm, and they harp on those primary objects of all government which demagogues and buncombe representatives forget or never knew. They are still more remarkable as the only writings of so young a man on such a subject whose matter is of any permanent value, and as showing how early his capacity for reducing the confused details of life to an embracing principle gained its full stature.

As theological opinions rarely please any one but the holder, I may perhaps indulge in the luxury of pleasing myself in commenting on Bagehot's, without expecting concurrence from others. He was much too cool, sceptical, practical, and humorous for a great theologian or religious leader; but his acute and original intellect suffered no paralysis in this field, and he had one factor of the highest religious temperament,—a strong bent toward and liking for mysticism. Indeed, in the "First Edinburgh Reviewers" he asserts flatly that "mysticism is true,"—which is a matter of definition. This raised him far above Paley and his group in spiritual insight, and gave him a sympathetic understanding of some very obscure problems in religious history. The best of his polemic work is the unanswerable piece of destructive criticism on Professor Rogers and the extreme supporters of the *Analogy* in the essay on Bishop Butler; his best positive contribution to theology is the explanation why religion does not destroy morality, in the "Ignorance of Man". This essay is wonderfully ingenious and plausible, but not always convincing or satisfying. For example, the "screen" theory is excellent for the screened, but hard on the screen; in fact, it is simply our old friend the Calvinistic doctrine of election over again, in a less extreme and shocking form. That ninety-nine per cent. of all immortal souls were created simply to agonise the remaining one per cent. into elevated spirituality, is not quite so bad as that they were created for nothing except to be damned; but there is the same division into small aristocracy and vast rabble, both

fixed as such by the Creator. It is the same old altar-piece toned down, with rags and crusts in place of the flames of hell. The truth is, a thinker reared under an aristocratic polity can hardly ever get it out of his head that there must be a small favoured "upper class" in the divine councils, for whose behoof the great mass exist. The influence of earthly on divine constitutions will bear more analysis than it has received: that there has been so little democracy here is unquestionably the reason there has been so little in the theories of the hereafter. Perhaps God is more of a democrat than is currently allowed, and it may be reserved for the United States to renovate theological as it has political speculation. That the dirty crowd was ever meant to be let into the fine parks of the future, is too shocking an idea from the aristocratic standpoint to be admitted, and rarely has been; Bagehot does not shut them out wholly, but preserves due subordination of ranks by reserving the "grand stand" for the spiritual nobility,—evidently holding that the spiritual world is organised on a "deferential" system like the English Government, which by a happy chance is the best model not only for this world but the next.

There would be no difficulty in extending these comments to any length,—the difficulty is to stop; but I have said quite enough, and perhaps on some points too much. And after all, what has been said of other great writers is true of Bagehot and indeed of every great writer,—the best answer to all fault-finding is to read him. His untimely death lost the world a great store of high and fine enjoyment, as well as strong and satisfying thought; and closing my intimate daily companionship with him seems like parting from one who is at once a powerful teacher and a beloved comrade.

F. M.

LETTERS ON THE FRENCH COUP D'ÉTAT OF 1851.

(*Addressed to the Editor of* "THE INQUIRER".)

LETTER I.

THE DICTATORSHIP.

PARIS, *8th Jan.*, 1852.

SIR,—You have asked me to tell you what I think of French affairs. I shall be pleased to do so; but I ought perhaps to begin by cautioning you against believing, or too much heeding, what I say. However, I do not imagine that I need do so; for with your experience of the public journals, you will be quite aware that it is not difficult to be an "occasional correspondent". Have your boots polished in a blacking-shop, and call the interesting officiator an "intelligent *ouvrier*"; be shaved, and cite the *coiffeur* as "a person in rather a superior station"; call your best acquaintance "a well-informed person," and all others "persons whom I have found to be occasionally not in error," and—abroad, at least—you will soon have matter for a newspaper letter. I should quite deceive you if I professed to have made these profound researches; nor, like Sir Francis Head, "do I no longer know where I am," because the French President has asked me to accompany him in his ride. My perception of personal locality has not as yet been so tried. I only know what a person who is in a foreign country during an important political catastrophe cannot avoid knowing, what he runs against, what is beaten into him, what he can hardly help hearing, seeing, and reflecting.

That Louis Napoleon has gone to Notre-Dame to return

thanks to God for the seven millions and odd suffrages of the French people—that he has taken up his abode at the Tuileries, and that he has had new napoleons coined in his name—that he has broken up the trees of liberty for firewood —that he has erased, or is erasing (for they are many), *Liberté*, *Egalité*, and *Fraternité*, from the National buildings,—all these things are so easy and so un-English, that I am pretty sure, with you, they will be thought signs of pompous impotence, and I suppose many people will be inclined to believe the best comment to be the one which I heard—"*Mon dieu, il a sauvé la France: la rue du Coq s'appelle maintenant la rue de l'Aigle!*" [1]

I am inclined, however, to imagine that this idea would be utterly erroneous; that, on the contrary, the President is just now, at least, really strong and really popular; that the act of 2nd December did succeed and is succeeding; that many, that most, of the inferior people do really and sincerely pray *Domine Salvum fac Napoleonem.*

In what I have seen of the comments of the English press upon recent events here, two things are not quite enough kept apart—I mean the temporary dictatorship of Louis Napoleon to meet and cope with the expected crisis of '52, and the continuance of that dictatorship hereafter,—the new, or as it is called, the *Bas*-Empire—in a word, the coming Constitution and questionable political machinery with which "the nephew of my uncle" is now proposing to endow France. Of course, in reality these two things *are* separate. It is one thing to hold that a military rule is required to meet an urgent and temporary difficulty: another, to advocate the continuance of such a system, when so critical a necessity no longer exists.

It seems to me, or would seem, if I did not know that I was contradicted both by much English writing and opinion, and also by many most competent judges here, that the first point, the temporary dictatorship, is a tolerably clear

[1] The general reader may not before have read, that the Rue du Coq l'Honoré is an old and well-known street in Paris, and that notwithstanding the substitution of the eagle for cock as a military emblem, there is no thought of changing its name.

case ; that it is not to be complicated with the perplexing inquiry what form of government will permanently suit the French people ; that the President was, under the actual facts of the case, quite justified in assuming the responsibility, though of course I allow that responsibility to be tremendous. My reasons for so believing I shall in this letter endeavour to explain, except that I shall not, I fancy, have room to say much on the moral defensibility or indefensibility of the *coup d'état ;* nor do I imagine that you want from me any ethical speculation—that is manufactured in Printing-house Square ; but I shall give the best account I can of the matter-of-fact consequences and antecedents of the New Revolution, of which, in some sense, a resident in France may feel without presumption that he knows something hardly so well known to those at home.

The political justification of Louis Napoleon is, as I apprehend, to be found in the state of the public mind which immediately preceded the *coup d'état.* It is very rarely that a country expects a revolution at a given time ; indeed, it is perhaps not common for ordinary persons in any country to anticipate a revolution at all ; though profound people may speculate, the mass will ever expect to-morrow to be as this day at least, if not more abundant. But once name the day, and all this is quite altered. As a general rule the very people who would be most likely to neglect general anticipation are exactly those most likely to exaggerate the proximate consequences of a certain impending event. At any rate, in France five weeks ago, the tradespeople talked of May, '52, as if it were the end of the world. Civilisation and Socialism might probably endure, but buying and selling would surely come to an end ; in fact, they anticipated a worse era than February, '48, when trade was at a standstill so long that it has hardly yet recovered, and when the Government stocks fell 40 per cent. It is hardly to be imagined upon what petty details the dread of political dissolution at a fixed and not distant time will condescend to intrude itself. I was present when a huge *Flamande*, in appearance so intrepid that I respectfully pitied her husband, came to ask the character of a *bonne.* I was amazed to hear

her say, "I hope the girl is strong, for when the revolution comes next May, and I have to turn off my helper, she will have enough to do". It seemed to me that a political apprehension must be pretty general, when it affected that most non-speculative of speculations, the *reckoning* of a housewife. With this feeling, everybody saved their money: who would spend in luxuries that which might so soon be necessary and invaluable! This economy made commerce—especially the peculiarly Parisian trade, which is almost wholly in articles that *can* be spared—worse and worse; the more depressed trade became, the more the traders feared, and the more they feared, the worse all trade inevitably grew.

I apprehend that this feeling extended very generally among all the classes who do not find or make a livelihood by literature or by politics. Among the clever people, who understood the subject, very likely the expectation was extremely different; but among the stupid ones who mind their business, and have a business to mind, there was a universal and excessive tremor. The only notion of '52 was "*on se battra dans la rue*". Their dread was especially of Socialism; they expected that the followers of M. Proudhon, who advisedly and expressly maintains "anarchy" to be the best form of Government, would attempt to carry out their theories in action, and that the division between the Legislative and Executive power would so cripple the party of order as to make their means of resistance for the moment feeble and difficult to use. The more sensible did not, I own, expect the annihilation of mankind: civilisation dies hard; the organised sense in all countries is strong; but they expected vaguely and crudely that the party which in '93 ruled for many months, and which in June, '48, fought so fanatically against the infant republic, would certainly make a desperate attack,—*might* for some time obtain the upper hand. Of course, it is now matter of mere argument whether the danger was real or unreal, and it is in some quarters rather the fashion to quiz the past fear, and to deny that any Socialists anywhere exist. In spite of the literary exertions of Proudhon and Louis Blanc, in spite of the prison quarrels of Blanqui and Barbès—there are certainly found people who question whether

anybody buys the books of the two former, or cares for the incarcerated dissensions of the two latter. But however this may be, it is certain that two days after the *coup d'état* a mass of persons thought it worth while to erect some dozen barricades, and among these, and superintending and directing their every movement, there certainly were, for I saw them myself, men whose physiognomy and accoutrements exactly resembled the traditional Montagnard, sallow, stern, compressed, with much marked features, which expressed but resisted suffering, and brooding one-ideaed thought, men who from their youth upward had for ever imagined, like Jonah, that they did well—immensely well—to be angry, men armed to the teeth, and ready, like the soldiers of the first Republic, to use their arms savagely and well in defence of theories broached by a Robespierre, a Blanqui, or a Barbès, gloomy fanatics, *over*-principled ruffians. I may perhaps be mistaken in reading in their features the characters of such men, but I know that when one of them disturbed my superintendence of barricade-making with a stern *allez vous-en*, it was not too slowly that I departed, for I *felt* that he would rather shoot me than not. Having seen these people, I conceive that they exist. But supposing that they were all simply fabulous, it would not less be certain that they were *believed* to be, and to be active; nor would it impair the fact that the quiet classes awaited their onslaught in morbid apprehension, with miserable and craven, and I fear we ought to say, *commercial* disquietude.

You will not be misled by any high-flown speculations about liberty or equality. You will, I imagine, concede to me that the first duty of a Government is to ensure the security of that industry which is the condition of social life and civilised cultivation; that especially in so excitable a country as France it is necessary that the dangerous classes should be saved from the strong temptation of long idleness; and that no danger could be more formidable than six months' beggary among the revolutionary *ouvriers*, immediately preceding the exact period fixed by European as well as French opinion for an apprehended convulsion. It is from this state of things, whether by fair means or foul, that Louis Napoleon has delivered France.

The effect was magical. Like people who have nearly died because it was prophesied they would die at a specified time, and instantly recovered when they found or thought that the time was gone and past, so France, timorously anticipating the fated revolution, in a moment revived when she found or fancied that it was come and over. Commerce instantly improved; New Year's Day, when all the Boulevards are one continued fair, has not (as I am told) been for some years so gay and splendid; people began to buy, and consequently to sell; for though it is quite possible, or even probable, that new misfortunes and convulsions may be in store for the French people, yet no one can say when they will be, and to wait till revolutions be exhausted is but the best Parisian for our old acquaintance *Rusticus expectat.* Clever people may now prove that the dreaded peril was a simple chimera, but they can't deny that the fear of it was very real and painful, nor can they dispute that in a week after the *coup d'état* it had at once, and apparently for ever, passed away.

I fear it must be said that no legal or constitutional act could have given an equal confidence. What was wanted was the assurance of an audacious Government, which would stop at nothing, scruple at nothing, to secure its own power and the tranquillity of the country. That assurance all now have; a man who will in this manner dare to dissolve an assembly constitutionally his superiors, then prevent their meeting by armed force; so well and so sternly repress the first beginning of an outbreak, with so little misgiving assume and exercise sole power,—may have enormous other defects, but is certainly a bold ruler—most probably an unscrupulous one—little likely to flinch from any inferior trial.

Of Louis Napoleon, whose personal qualities are, for the moment, so important, I cannot now speak at length. But I may say that, with whatever other deficiencies he may have, he has one excellent advantage over other French statesmen—he has never been a professor, nor a journalist, nor a promising barrister, nor, by taste, a *littérateur.* He has not confused himself with history; he does not think in leading articles, in long speeches, or in agreeable essays. But he is capable of

observing facts rightly, of reflecting on them simply, and acting on them discreetly. And his motto is Danton's, *De l'audace et toujours de l'audace*, and this you know, according to Bacon, in time of revolution, will carry a man far, perhaps even to ultimate victory, and that ever-future millennium, "*la consolidation de la France*".

But on these distant questions I must not touch. I have endeavoured to show you what was the crisis, how strong the remedy, and what the need of a dictatorship. I hope to have convinced you that the first was imminent, the second effectual, and the last expedient.

I remain yours,

AMICUS.

LETTER II.

THE MORALITY OF THE COUP D'ÉTAT.

PARIS, 15*th Jan.*, 1852.

SIR,—I know quite well what will be said about, or in answer to, my last letter. It will be alleged that I think everything in France is to be postponed to the Parisian commerce—that a Constitution, Equality, Liberty, a Representative Government, are all to be set aside if they interfere even for a moment with the sale of *étrennes* or the manufacture of gimcracks.

I, as you know, hold no such opinions: it would not be necessary for me to undeceive you, who would, I rather hope, never suspect me of *that* sort of folly. But as St. Athanasius aptly observes, "for the sake of the women who may be led astray, I will this very instant explain my sentiments".

Contrary to Sheridan's rule, I commence by a concession. I certainly admit, indeed I would, upon occasion, maintain, *bonbons* and bracelets to be things less important than common law and Constitutional action. A *coup d'état* would, I may allow, be mischievously supererogatory if it only promoted the enjoyment of what a lady in the highest circles is said to call "bigotry and virtue". But the real question is not to be so disposed of. The Parisian trade, the jewellery, the baubles,

the silks, the luxuries, which the Exhibition showed us to be the characteristic industry of France, are very dust in the balance if weighed against the hands and arms which their manufacture employs—the industrial habits which their regular sale rewards—the hunger and idle weariness which the certain demand for them prevents. For this is the odd peculiarity of commercial civilisation. The life, the welfare, the existence of thousands depend on their being paid for doing what seems nothing when done. That gorgeous dandies should wear gorgeous studs—that pretty girls should be prettily dressed—that pleasant drawing-rooms should be pleasantly attired—may seem, to people of our age, sad trifling. But grave as we are, we must become graver still when we reflect on the horrid suffering which the sudden cessation of large luxurious consumption would certainly create, if we imagine such a city as Lyons to be, without warning, turned out of work, and the population feelingly told "to cry in the streets when no man regardeth".

The first duty of society is the preservation of society. By the sound work of old-fashioned generations—by the singular painstaking of the slumberers in churchyards—by dull care—by stupid industry, a certain social fabric somehow exists; people contrive to go out to their work, and to find work to employ them actually until the evening, body and soul are kept together, and this is what mankind have to show for their six thousand years of toil and trouble.

To keep up this system we must sacrifice everything. Parliaments, liberty, leading articles, essays, eloquence,—all are good, but they are secondary; at all hazards, and if we can, mankind must be kept alive. And observe, as time goes on, this fabric becomes a tenderer and a tenderer thing. Civilisation can't bivouac; dangers, hardships, sufferings, lightly borne by the coarse muscle of earlier times, are soon fatal to noble and cultivated organisation. Women in early ages are masculine, and, as a return match, the men of late years are becoming women. The strong apprehension of a Napoleonic invasion has, perhaps, just now caused more substantial misery in England than once the wars of the Roses.

To apply this "screed of doctrine" to the condition of France. I do not at all say that, but for the late *coup d'état*, French civilisation would certainly have soon come to a final end. *Some* people might have continued to take their meals. Even Socialism would hardly abolish *eau sucrée*. But I do assert that, according to the common belief of the common people, their common comforts were in considerable danger. The debasing torture of acute apprehension was eating into the crude pleasure of stupid lives. No man liked to take a long bill; no one could imagine to himself what was coming. Fear was paralysing life and labour, and as I said at length, in my last, fear, so intense, whether at first reasonable or unreasonable, will, ere long, invincibly justify itself. May, 1852, would, in all likelihood, have been an evil and bloody time, if it had been preceded by six months' famine among the starvable classes.

At present all is changed. Six weeks ago society was living from hand to mouth: now she feels sure of her next meal. And this, in a dozen words, is the real case—the political excuse for Prince Louis Napoleon. You ask me, or I should not do so, to say a word or two on the moral question and the oath. You are aware how limited my means of doing so are. I have forgotten Paley, and have never read the Casuists. But it certainly does not seem to me proved or clear, that a man who has sworn, even in the most solemn manner, to see another drown, is therefore quite bound, or even at liberty, to stand placidly on the bank. What ethical philosopher has demonstrated this? Coleridge said it was difficult to advance a new error in morals,—yet this, I think, would be one; and the keeping of oaths is peculiarly a point of mere science, for Christianity, in terms at least, only forbids them all. And supposing I am right, such certainly was the exact position of Louis Napoleon. He saw society, I will not say dying or perishing—for I hate unnecessarily to overstate my point—in danger of incurring extreme and perhaps lasting calamities, likely not only to impair the happiness, but moreover to debase the character of the French nation, and these calamities he could prevent. Now who has shown that ethics require of him to have held his hand?

The severity with which the riot was put down on the first Thursday in December has, I observe, produced an extreme effect in England; and with our happy exemption from martial bloodshed, it must, of course, do so. But better one *émeute* now than many in May, be it ever remembered. There are things more demoralising than death, and among these is the sickly-apprehensive suffering for long months of an entire people.

Of course you understand that I am not holding up Louis Napoleon as a complete standard either of ethical scrupulosity or disinterested devotedness; veracity has never been the family failing—for the great Emperor was a still greater liar. And Prince Louis has been long playing what, morality apart, is the greatest political misfortune to any statesman—a visibly selfish game. Very likely, too, the very high heroes of history—a Washington, an Aristides, by Carlyle profanely called "favourites of Dryasdust," would have extricated the country more easily, and perhaps more completely, from its scrape. Their ennobling rectitude would have kept M. de Girardin consistent, and induced M. Thiers to vote for the Revision of the Constitution; and even though, as of old, the Mountain were deafer than the uncharmed adder, a sufficient number of self-seeking Conservatives might have been induced by perfect confidence in a perfect President, to mend a crotchety performance, that was visibly ruining, what the poet calls, "The ever-ought-to-be-conserved-thing," their country.

I remember reading, several years ago, an article in the *Westminster Review*, on the lamented Armand Carrel, in which the author,[1] well known to be one of our most distinguished philosophers, took occasion to observe that what the French most wanted was "*un homme de caractère*". Everybody is aware—for all except myself know French quite perfectly—that this expression is not by any means equivalent to our common phrase, a "man of character," or "respectable individual," it does not at all refer to mere goodness; it is more like what we sometimes say of an eccentric country gentleman, "He is a character"; for it denotes a singular preponderance of pecu-

[1] John Stuart Mill, October, 1837; reprinted in Mill's works.

liar qualities, an accomplished obstinacy, an inveterate fixedness of resolution and idea that enables him to get done what he undertakes. The Duke of Wellington is, "*par excellence, homme de caractère*"; Lord Palmerston rather so; Mr. Cobden a little; Lord John Russell not at all. Now exactly this, beyond the immense majority of educated men, Louis Napoleon is, as a pointed writer describes him: "The President is a superior man, but his superiority is of the sort that is hidden under a dubious exterior: his life is entirely internal; his speech does not betray his inspiration; his gesture does not copy his audacity; his look does not reflect his ardour; his step does not reveal his resolution; his whole mental nature is in some sort repressed by his physical: he thinks and does not discuss; he decides and does not deliberate; he acts without agitation; he speaks, and assigns no reason; his best friends are unacquainted with him; he obtains their confidence, but never asks it".[1] Also his whole nature is, and has been, absorbed in the task which he has undertaken. For many months, his habitual expression has been exactly that of a gambler who is playing for his highest and last stake; in society it is said to be the same—a general and diffusive politeness, but an ever-ready reflection and a constant reserve. His great qualities are rather peculiar. He is not, like his uncle, a creative genius, who will leave behind him social institutions such as those which nearly alone, in this changeful country, seem to be always exempt from every change; he will suggest little; he has hardly an organising mind; but he will coolly estimate his own position and that of France; he will observe all dangers and compute all chances. He can act—he can be idle: he may work what is; he may administer the country. Anyhow, *il fera son possible*, and you know, in the nineteenth century, how much and how rare that is.

I see many people are advancing beautiful but untrue ethics about his private character. Thus I may quote as follows from a very estimable writer: "On the 15th October, he requested his passports and left Aremberg for London. In this capital he remained from the end of 1838 to the month of August,

[1] M. de la Guersonnière in the Paris *Pays*.

1840. In these twenty months, instead of learning to command armies and govern empires, his days and nights, when not given to frivolous pleasures, were passed on the turf, in the betting-room, or in clubs where high play and desperate stakes roused the jaded energy of the *blasé* gambler."[1]

The notion of this gentleman clearly is, that a betting man can't in nature be a good statesman; that horse-racing is providentially opposed to political excellence; that "by an interesting illustration of the argument from design, we notice an antithesis alike marvellous and inevitable," between turf and tariffs. But, setting Paley for a moment apart, how is a man, by circumstances excluded from military and political life, and by birth from commercial pursuits, really and effectually to learn administration? Mr. Kirwan imagines that he should read all through Burke, common-place Tacitus, collate Cicero, and annotate Montesquieu. Yet take an analogous case. Suppose a man, shut out from trading life, is to qualify himself for the practical management of a counting-house. Do you fancy he will do it "by a judicious study of the principles of political economy," and by elaborately re-reading Adam Smith and John Mill? He had better be at Newmarket, and devote his *heures perdues* to the Oaks and the St. Leger. He may learn there what he will never acquire from literary study—the instinctive habit of applied calculation, which is essential to a merchant and extremely useful to a statesman. Where, too, did Sir Robert Walpole learn business, or Charles Fox, or anybody in the eighteenth century? And after all, M. Michel de Bourges gave the real solution of the matter. "Louis Napoleon," said the best orator of the Mountain, "may have had rather a stormy youth (laughter). But don't suppose that any one in all France imagines you, you *Messieurs*, of the immaculate majority, to be the least better (sensation). I am not speaking to saints" (uproar). If compared with contemporary French statesmen, and the practical choice is between him and them, the President will not seem what he appears when measured by the notions of a people who exact at least

[1] A. V. Kirwan, Esq., Barrister-at-Law, in *Fraser's Magazine* of Jan., 1852.

from inferior functionaries *a rigid decorum in the pettiest details of their private morals.*

I have but one last point to make about this *coup d'état*, and then I will release you from my writing. I do not know whether you in England rightly realise the French Socialism. Take, for instance, M. Proudhon, who is perhaps their ideal and perfect type. He was *représentant de la Seine* in the late Assembly, elected, which is not unimportant, after the publication of his books and on account of his opinions. In his *Confessions d'un Révolutionnaire*, a very curious book—for he writes extremely well—after maintaining that our well-known but, as we imagine, advanced friends, Ledru Rollin, and Louis Blanc, and Barbès, and Blanqui, are all *réactionnaires*, and clearly showing, to the grief of mankind, that once the legislator of the Luxembourg wished to preserve "equilibrium," and the author of the provincial circulars to maintain "tranquillity," he gives the following *bonâ fide* and amusing account of his own investigations :—

"I commenced my task of solitary conspiracy by the study of the socialisms of antiquity, necessary, in my judgment, to determine the law, whether practical or theoretical, of progress. These socialisms I found in the Bible. A memoir on the institution of the Sabbath—considered with regard to morals, to health, and in its relation to the family and the city—procured for me a bronze medal from my academy. From the faith in which I had been reared, I had precipitated myself headlong, head-foremost, into pure reason, and already, what was wonderful and a good omen, when I made Moses a philosopher and a socialist, I was greeted with applause. If I am now in error, the fault is not merely mine. Was there ever a similar seduction ?

"But I studied, above all, with a view to action. I cared little for academical laurels. I had no leisure to become *savant*, still less a *littérateur* or an archæologist. I began immediately upon political economy.

"I had assumed as the rule of my investigations that every principle which, pushed to its consequences, should end in a contradiction, must be considered false and null ; and that if this principle had been developed into an institution, the institution itself must be considered as factitious, as utopian.

"Furnished with this criterion, I chose for the subject of investigation what I found in society the most ancient, the most respectable, the most universal, the least controverted,—property. Everybody knows what happened ; after a long, a minute, and, above all, an impartial analysis, I

arrived, as an algebraist guided by his equations, to this surprising conclusion. Property, consider it as you will,—refer it to what principle you may, is a contradictory idea ; and as the denial of property carries with it of necessity that of authority, I deduced immediately from my first axiom also this corollary, not less paradoxical, the true form of government is *anarchy*. Lastly, finding by a mathematical demonstration that no amelioration in the economy of society could be arrived at by its natural constitution, or without the concurrence and reflective adhesion of its members ; observing, also, that there is a definite epoch in the life of societies, in which their progress, at first unreflecting, requires the intervention of the free reason of man, I concluded that this spontaneous and impulsive force (*cette force d'impulsion spontanée*), which we call Providence, is not everything in the affairs of this world : from that moment, without being an Atheist, I ceased to worship God. He'll get on without your so doing, said to me one day the *Constitutionnel*. Well : perhaps he may."

These theories have been expanded into many and weary volumes, and condensed into the famous phrase, "*La Propriété c'est le vol*" ; and have procured their author, in his own sect, reputation and authority.

The *Constitutionnel* had another hit against M. Proudhon, a day or two ago. They presented their readers with two decrees in due official form (the walls were at the moment covered with those of the 2nd December), as the last ideal of what the straightest sect of the Socialists particularly desire. It was as follows : "Nothing any longer exists. Nobody is charged with the execution of the aforesaid decree. Signed, Vacuum."

Such is the speculation of the new reformers—what their practices would be I can hardly tell you. My feeble income does not allow me to travel to the Basses Alpes and really investigate the subject ; but if one quarter of the stories in circulation are in the least to be believed (we are quite dependent on oral information, for the Government papers deal in asterisks and "details unfit for publication," and the rest are devoted to the state of the navy and say nothing), the atrocities rival the nauseous corruption of what our liberal essayist calls "Jacobin carrion," the old days of Carrier and Barère.[1] This is what people here are afraid of ; and that is why I

[1] Macaulay : Close of Essay on Barère. (Forrest Morgan.)

write such things—and not to horrify you, or amuse you, or bore you—anything rather than that; and they think themselves happy in finding a man who, with or without whatever other qualities or defects, will keep them from the vaunted Millennium and much-expected *Jacquerie*. I hope you think so, too—and that I am not, as they say in my native Tipperary, "Whistling jigs to a mile-stone".

I am, sir, yours truly,

AMICUS.

P.S.—You will perhaps wish me to say something on the great event of this week, the exile of the more dangerous members of the late Assembly, and the transportation of the Socialists to Cayenne. Both measures were here expected; though I think that both lists are more numerous than was anticipated: but no one really knew what would be done by this silent Government. You will laugh at me when I tell you that both measures have been well received: but properly limited and understood, I am persuaded that the fact is so.

Of course, among the friends of exiled *représentants*, among the *littérateurs* throughout whose ranks these measures are intended to "strike terror and inspire respect,"[1] you would hear that there never was such tyranny since the beginning of mankind. But among the mass of the industrious classes—between whom and the politicians there is internecine war—I fancy that on turning the conversation to either of the most recent events, you would hear something of this sort: "*Ça ne m'occupe pas*". "What is that to *me?*" "*Je suis pour la tranquillité, moi.*" "I sold four brooches yesterday." The Socialists who have been removed from prison to the colony, it is agreed were "pestilent fellows perverting the nation," and forbidding to pay tribute to M. Bonaparte. Indeed, they can hardly expect commercial sympathy. "Our national honour rose—our stocks fell," is Louis Blanc's perpetual comment on his favourite events, and it is difficult to say which of its two clauses he dwells upon with the intenser relish. It is generally thought by those who think about the matter, that both

[1] Kinglake: *Eöthen*. (Forrest Morgan.)

the transportation, and in all cases, certainly, the exile will only be a temporary measure, and that the great mass of the people in both lists will be allowed to return to their homes when the present season of extreme excitement has passed over. Still, I am not prepared to defend the *number* of transportations. That strong measures of the sort were necessary, I make no doubt. If Socialism exist, and the fear of it exist, something must be done to reassure the people. You will understand that it is not a judicial proceeding either in essence or in form; it is not to be considered as a punishment for what men have done, but as a perfect precaution against what they may do. Certainly, it is to be regretted that the cause of order is so weak as to need such measures; but if it *is* so weak, the Government must no doubt take them. Of course, however, "our brethren," who are retained in such numbers to write down Prince Louis, are quite right to use without stint or stopping this most un-English proceeding; it is their case, and you and I from old misdeeds know pretty well how it is to be managed. There will be no imputation of reasonable or humane motives to the Government, and no examination of the existing state of France: let both these come from the other side—but elegiac eloquence is inexhaustibly exuded—the cruel corners of history are ransacked for petrifying precedents—and I observe much excellent weeping on the Cromwellian deportations and the ten years' exile of Madame de Staël. But after all they have missed the tempting parallel—I mean the "rather long" proscription list which Octavius—"*l'ancien neveu de l'ancien oncle*"—concocted with Mark Antony in the marshes of Bononia, and whereby they thoroughly purged old Rome of its turbulent and revolutionary elements. I suspect our estimable contemporaries regret to remember of how much good order, long tranquillity, "*beata pleno copia cornu*" and other many "little comforts" to the civilised world that very "strong" proceeding, whether in ethics justifiable or not, certainly was in fact the beginning and foundation.

The fate of the African generals is much to be regretted, and the Government will incur much odium if the exile of

General Changarnier is prolonged any length of time. He is doubtless "dangerous" for the moment, for his popularity with the army is considerable, and he divides the party of order; he is also a practical man and an unpleasant enemy, but he is much respected and little likely (I fancy) to attempt anything against any settled Government.

As for M. Thiers and M. Emile de Girardin—the ablest of the exiles—I have heard no one pity them; they have played a selfish game—they have encountered a better player—they have been beaten—and this is the whole matter. You will remember that it was the adhesion of these two men that procured for M. Bonaparte a large part of his *first* six millions. M. de Girardin, whom General Cavaignac had discreetly imprisoned and indiscreetly set free, wrote up the "opposition candidate" daily, in the *Presse* (he has since often and often tried to write him down), and M. Thiers was his Privy Councillor. "*Mon cher Prince*," they say, said the latter, "your address to the people won't do at all. I'll get one of the *rédacteurs* of the *Constitutionnel* to draw you up something tolerable." You remember the easy patronage with which Cicero speaks in his letter of the "boy" that was outwitting him all the while. But, however, observe I do not at all, notwithstanding my Latin, insinuate or assert that Louis Napoleon, though a considerable man, is exactly equal to keep the footsteps of Augustus. A feeble parody may suffice for an inferior stage and not too gigantic generation. Now I really *have* done.

Letter III.

ON THE NEW CONSTITUTION OF FRANCE AND THE APTITUDE OF THE FRENCH CHARACTER FOR NATIONAL FREEDOM.

Paris, 20*th Jan.*, 1852.

Sir,—We have now got our Constitution. The Napoleonic era has commenced; the term of the dictatorship is fixed and the consolidation of France is begun. You will perhaps anticipate from the conclusion of the last letter, that

à propos of this great event, I should gratify you with bright anticipations of an Augustan age, and a quick revival of Catonic virtue, with an assurance that the night is surely passed and the day altogether come, with a solemn invocation to the rising luminary, and an original panegyric on the "golden throned morning".

I must always regret to disappoint any one; but I feel obliged to entertain you instead with torpid philosophy, constitutional details, and a dull disquisition on national character.

The details of the new institutions you will have long ago learnt from the daily papers. I believe they may be fairly and nearly accurately described as the Constitution of the Consulate, *minus* the ideas of the man who made it. You will remember that, besides the First Magistrate, the Senate, the House of Representatives, the Council of State (which we may call, in legal language, the "common form" of continental constitution), the ingenious Abbé Sieyès had devised some four principal peculiarities, which were to be remembered to all time as masterpieces of political invention. These were the utter inaction of the First Magistrate, copied, as I believe, from the English Constitution—the subordination to him of two Consuls, one to administer peace and the other war, who were intended to be the real hands and arms of the Government—the silence of the Senate—the double and very peculiar election of the House of Representatives. Napoleon the Great, as we are now to speak, struck out the first of these, being at the moment working some fifteen hours a day at the reorganisation of France. He said plainly and rather sternly that he had no intention of doing nothing—the *idéologue* went to the wall—the "excellent idea" put forth in happy forgetfulness of real facts and real people was instantly abandoned —for the Grand Elector was substituted a First Consul, who, so far from being nothing, was very soon the whole Government. Napoleon the Little, as I fear the Parisian multitude may learn to call him, has effaced the other three "strokes of statesmanship". The new Constitution of France is exactly the "common form" of political conveyancing, *plus* the *Idée Napoléonienne* of an all-suggesting and all-administering mind.

I have extremely little to tell you about its reception; it has made no "sensation," not so much as even the "fortified camps" which his Grace is said to be devising for the defence of our own London. Indeed, "*Il a peur*" is a very common remark (conceivable to everybody who knows "the Duke"), and it would seem even a refreshing alleviation of their domestic sorrows. In fact, home politics are now *the* topic; geography and the state of foreign institutions are not, indeed, the true Parisian line—but it has, in fine, been distinctly discovered that there are no *salons* in Cayenne, which, once certain, the logical genius of the nation, with incredible swiftness, deduced the clear conclusion that it was better not to go there. Seriously, I fancy—for I have no data on which to found real knowledge of so delicate a point—the new Constitution is regarded merely as what Father Newman would call a "preservative addition" or a "necessary development," essential to the "chronic continuance" of the Napoleonic system; for the moment the mass of the people wish the President to govern them, but they don't seem to me to care how. The political people, I suppose, hate it, because for some time it will enable him, if not shot, to govern effectually. I say, if not shot—for people are habitually recounting under their breath some new story of an attempt at assassination, which the papers suppress. I am inclined to think that these rumours are pure lies; but they show the feeling. You know, according to the Constitution of 1848, the President would now be a mere outlaw, and whoever finds him may slay him, if he can. It is true that the elaborate masterpiece of M. Marrast is already fallen into utter oblivion (it is no more remembered than yesterday's *Times*, or the political institutions of Saxon Mercia); but nevertheless such, according to the antediluvian *régime*, would be the law, and it is possible that a mindful Montagnard may upon occasion recall even so insignificant a circumstance.

I have a word to say on the Prologue of the President. When I first began to talk politics with French people, I was much impressed by the fact to which he has there drawn attention. You know that all such conversation, when one of the

interlocutors is a foreigner, speaking slowly and but imperfectly the language of the country in which he is residing, is pretty much in the style of that excellent work which was the terror of our childhood—Joyce's *Scientific Dialogues*—wherein, as you may remember, an accomplished tutor, with a singular gift of scholastic improvisation, instructs a youthful pupil exceedingly given to feeble questions and auscultatory repose. Now, when I began in Parisian society thus to enact the *rôle* of "George" or "Caroline," I was, I repeat, much struck with the fact that the Emperor had done everything: to whatever subject my diminutive inquiry related, the answer was nearly universally the same—an elegy on Napoleon. Nor is this exactly absurd; for whether or not "the nephew" is right in calling the uncle the greatest of modern statesmen, he is indisputably the modern statesman who has founded the greatest number of existing institutions. In the pride of philosophy and in the madness of an hour, the Constituent Assembly and the Convention swept away not only the monstrous abuses of the old *régime*, but that *régime* itself—its essence and its mechanism, utterly and entirely. They destroyed whatever they could lay their hands on. The consequence was certain—when they tried to construct they found they had no materials. They left a vacuum. No greater benefit could have been conferred on politicians gifted with the creative genius of Napoleon. It was like the fire of London to Sir Christopher Wren. With a fertility of invention and an obstinacy in execution, equalling, if not surpassing, those of Cæsar and Charlemagne, he had before him an open stage, more clear and more vast than in historical times fortune has ever offered to any statesman. He was nearly in the position of the imagined legislator of the Greek legends and the Greek philosophers—he could enact any law, and rescind any law. Accordingly, the educational system, the banking system, the financial system, the municipal system, the administrative system, the civil legislation, the penal legislation, the commercial legislation (besides all manner of secondary creations—public buildings and public institutions without number), all date from the time, and are more or less deeply inscribed with the genius, the firm will, and unresting

energies of Napoleon. And this, which is the great strength of the present President, is the great difficulty—I fear the insurmountable difficulty—in the way of Henry the Fifth. The first revolution is to the French what the deluge is to the rest of mankind; the whole system then underwent an entire change. A French politician will no more cite as authority the domestic policy of Colbert or Louvois than we should think of going for ethics and æsthetics to the bigamy of Lamech, or the musical accomplishments of Tubal Cain. If the Comte de Chambord be (as it is quite on the cards that he may be) within a few years restored, he must govern by the instrumentality of laws and systems devised by the politicians whom he execrates and denounces, and devised, moreover, often enough, especially to keep out him and his. It is difficult to imagine that a strong Government can be composed of materials so inharmonious. Meanwhile, to the popular imagination, "the Emperor" is the past; the House of Bourbon is as historical as the House of Valois; a peasant is little oftener reminded of the "third dynasty" than of the long-haired kings.

In discussing any Constitution, there are two ideas to be first got rid of. The first is the idea of our barbarous ancestors—now happily banished from all civilised society, but still prevailing in old manor-houses, in rural parsonages, and other curious repositories of mouldering ignorance, and which in such arid solitudes is thus expressed: "Why can't they have Kings, Lords and Commons, *like we have?* What fools foreigners are." The second pernicious mistake is, like the former, seldom now held upon system, but so many hold it in bits and fragments, and without system, that it is still rather formidable. I allude to the old idea which still here creeps out in conversation, and sometimes in writing,—that politics are simply a subdivision of immutable ethics; that there are certain rights of men in all places and all times, which are the sole and sufficient foundation of all government, and that accordingly a single stereotype Government is to make the tour of the world—that you have no more right to deprive a Dyak of his vote in a "possible" Polynesian Parliament, than you have to steal his mat.

Burke first taught the world at large, in opposition to both, and especially to the latter of these notions, that politics are made of time and place—that institutions are shifting things, to be tried by and adjusted to the shifting conditions of a mutable world—that, in fact, politics are but a piece of business—to be determined in every case by the exact exigencies of that case; in plain English—by sense and circumstances.

This was a great step in political philosophy—though it *now* seems the events of 1848 have taught thinking persons (I fancy) further. They have enabled us to say that of all these circumstances so affecting political problems, by far and out of all question the most important is *national character*. In that year the same experiment—the experiment, as its friends say, of Liberal and Constitutional Government—as its enemies say, of Anarchy and Revolution—was tried in every nation of Europe—with what varying futures and differing results! The effect has been to teach men—not only speculatively to know, but practically to feel, that no absurdity is so great as to imagine the same species of institutions suitable or possible for Scotchmen and Sicilians, for Germans and Frenchmen, for the English and the Neapolitans. With a well-balanced national character (we now know) liberty is a stable thing. A really practical people will work in political business, as in private business, almost the absurdest, the feeblest, the most inconsistent set of imaginable regulations. Similarly, or rather reversely, the best institutions will not keep right a nation that *will* go wrong. Paper is but paper, and no virtue is to be discovered in it to retain within due boundaries the undisciplined passions of those who have never set themselves seriously to restrain them. In a word—as people of "large roundabout common-sense" will (as a rule) somehow get on in life—no matter what their circumstances or their fortune—so a nation which applies good judgment, forbearance, a rational and compromising habit to the management of free institutions, will certainly succeed; while the more eminently gifted national character will but be a source and germ of endless and disastrous failure, if, with whatever other eminent qualities, it be deficient in these plain, solid, and essential requisites.

The formation of *this* character is one of the most secret of marvellous mysteries. Why nations have the character we see them to have is, speaking generally, as little explicable to our shallow perspicacity, as why individuals, our friends or our enemies, for good or for evil, have the character which they have; why one man is stupid and another clever—why another volatile and a fourth consistent—this man by instinct generous, and that man by instinct niggardly. I am not speaking of actions, you observe, but of tendencies and temptations. These and other similar problems daily crowd on our observation in millions and millions, and only do not puzzle us because we are too familiar with their difficulty to dream of attempting their solution. Only this much is most certain,—all men and all nations have a character, and that character when once taken, is, I do not say unchangeable—religion modifies it, catastrophe annihilates it—but the least changeable thing in this ever-varying and changeful world. Take the soft mind of the boy, and (strong and exceptional aptitudes and tendencies excepted) you may make him merchant, barrister, butcher, baker, surgeon, or apothecary. But once make him an apothecary, and he will never afterwards bake wholesome bread—make him a butcher, and he will kill too extensively, even for a surgeon—make him a barrister, and he will be dim on double entry, and crass on bills of lading. Once conclusively form him to one thing, and no art and no science will ever twist him to another. Nature, says the philosopher, has no Delphic daggers!—no men or maids of all work—she keeps one being to one pursuit—to each is a single choice afforded, but no more again thereafter for ever. And it is the same with nations. The Jews of to-day are the Jews in face and form of the Egyptian sculptures; in character they are the Jews of Moses—the negro is the negro of a thousand years—the Chinese, by his own account, is the mummy of a million. "Races and their varieties," says the historian, "seem to have been created with an inward *nisus* diminishing with the age of the world." The people of the South are yet the people of the South, fierce and angry as their summer sun—the people of the North are still cold and stubborn like their own north

wind—the people of the East "mark not, but are still"—the people of the West "are going through the ends of the earth, and walking up and down in it". The fact is certain, the cause beyond us. The subtle system of obscure causes, whereby sons and daughters resemble not only their fathers and mothers but even their great-great-grandfathers and their great-great-grandmothers, may very likely be destined to be very inscrutable. But as the fact is so, so moreover, in history, nations have one character, one set of talents, one list of temptations, and one duty—to use the one and get the better of the other. There are breeds in the animal man just as in the animal dog. When you hunt with greyhounds and course with beagles, then, and not till then, may you expect the inbred habits of a thousand years to pass away, that Hindoos can be free, or that Englishmen will be slaves.

I need not prove to you that the French *have* a national character. Nor need I try your patience with a likeness of it. I have only to examine whether it be a fit basis for national freedom. I fear you will laugh when I tell you what I conceive to be about the most essential mental quality for a free people, whose liberty is to be progressive, permanent, and on a large scale; it is much *stupidity*. I see you are surprised—you are going to say to me, as Socrates did to Polus, "My young friend, *of course* you are right; but will you explain what you mean?—as yet you are not intelligible". I will do so as well as I can, and endeavour to make good what I say—not by an *a priori* demonstration of my own, but from the details of the present, and the facts of history. Not to begin by wounding any present susceptibilities, let me take the Roman character—for, with one great exception—I need not say to whom I allude—they are the great political people of history. Now, is not a certain dulness their most visible characteristic? What is the history of their speculative mind?—a blank. What their literature?—a copy. They have left not a single discovery in any abstract science; not a single perfect or well-formed work of high imagination. The Greeks, the perfection of narrow and accomplished genius, bequeathed to mankind the ideal forms of self-idolising art—the Romans

imitated and admired; the Greeks explained the laws of Nature—the Romans wondered and despised; the Greeks invented a system of numerals second only to that now in use—the Romans counted to the end of their days with the clumsy apparatus which we still call by their name; the Greeks made a capital and scientific calendar—the Romans began their month when the Pontifex Maximus happened to spy out the new moon. Throughout Latin literature, this is the perpetual puzzle—Why are we free and they slaves? we prætors and they barbers? Why do the stupid people always win, and the clever people always lose? I need not say that, in real sound stupidity, the English are unrivalled. You'll hear more wit, and better wit, in an Irish street-row than would keep Westminster Hall in humour for five weeks. Or take Sir Robert Peel—our last great statesman, the greatest Member of Parliament that ever lived, an absolutely perfect transactor of public business—the type of the nineteenth-century Englishman, as Sir R. Walpole was of the eighteenth. Was there ever such a dull man? Can any one, without horror, foresee the reading of his memoirs? A *clairvoyante*, with the book shut, may get on; but who now, in the flesh, will ever endure the open *vision* of endless recapitulation of interminable Hansard? Or take Mr. Tennyson's inimitable description:—

> "No little lily-handed Baronet he,
> A great broad-shouldered genial Englishman,
> A lord of fat prize oxen and of sheep,
> A raiser of huge melons and of pine,
> A patron of some thirty charities,
> A pamphleteer on guano and on grain,
> A quarter sessions chairman, abler none." [1]

Whose company so soporific? His talk is of truisms and bullocks; his head replete with rustic visions of mutton and turnips, and a cerebral edition of Burn's *Justice!* Notwithstanding, he is the salt of the earth, the best of the English breed. Who is like him for sound sense? But I must restrain my enthusiasm. You don't want me to tell you that a Frenchman—a real Frenchman—can't be stupid; *esprit* is his

[1] "The Princess."

essence, wit is to him as water, *bons-mots* as *bonbons*. He reads and he learns by reading; levity and literature are essentially his line. Observe the consequence. The outbreak of 1848 was accepted in every province in France; the decrees of the Parisian mob were received and registered in all the municipalities of a hundred cities; the Revolution ran like the fluid of the telegraph down the *Chemin de fer du Nord;* it stopped at the Belgian frontier. Once brought into contact with the dull phlegm of the stupid Fleming, the poison was powerless. You remember what the Norman butler said to Wilkin Flammock, of the fulling mills, at the castle of the Garde Douloureuse: "That draught which will but warm your Flemish hearts, will put wildfire into Norman brains; and what may only encourage your countrymen to man the walls, will make ours fly over the battlements".[1] *Les braves Belges*, I make no doubt, were quite pleased to observe what folly was being exhibited by those very clever French, whose tongue they want to speak, and whose literature they try to imitate. In fact, what we opprobriously call stupidity, though not an enlivening quality in common society, is Nature's favourite resource for preserving steadiness of conduct and consistency of opinion. It enforces concentration; people who learn slowly, learn only what they must. The best security for people's doing their duty is, that they should not know anything else to do; the best security for fixedness of opinion is, that people should be incapable of comprehending what is to be said on the other side. These valuable truths are no discoveries of mine. They are familiar enough to people whose business it is to know them. Hear what a dense and aged attorney says of your peculiarly promising barrister: "Sharp! oh yes, yes! he's too sharp by half. He is not *safe;* not a minute, isn't that young man." "What style, sir," asked of an East India Director some youthful aspirant for literary renown, "is most to be preferred in the composition of official despatches?" "My good fellow," responded the ruler of Hindostan, "the style *as we* like is the Humdrum." I extend this, and ad-

[1] *The Betrothed*, chap. iii.

visedly maintain that nations, just as individuals, may be too clever to be practical, and not dull enough to be free.

How far this is true of the French, and how far the gross deficiency I have indicated is modified by their many excellent qualities, I hope at a future time to inquire.

I am, sir, yours truly,

AMICUS.

LETTER IV.

ON THE APTITUDE OF THE FRENCH CHARACTER FOR NATIONAL SELF-GOVERNMENT.

PARIS, 29*th Jan.*, 1852.

SIR,—There is a simple view of the subject on which I wrote you last week, that I wish to bring under your notice. The experiment (as it is called) of establishing political freedom in France is now sixty years old; and the best that we can say of it is, that it is an experiment still. There have been perhaps half a dozen new beginnings—half a dozen complete failures. I am aware that each of these failures can be excellently explained—each beginning shown to be quite necessary. But there are certain reasonings which, though outwardly irrefragable, the crude human mind is always most unwilling to accept. Among these are different and subtle explications of several apparently similar facts. Thus, to choose an example suited to the dignity of my subject, if a gentleman from town takes a day's shooting in the country, and should chance (as has happened) at first going off, to miss some six times running, how luminously soever he may "explain" each failure as it occurs, however "expanded a view" he may take of the whole series, whatever popular illustrations of projectile philosophy he may propound to the bird-slaying agriculturists—the impression on the crass intelligence of the gamekeeper will quite clearly be, "He beint noo shot homsoever—aint thickeer". Similarly, to compare small things with great, when I myself read in Thiers and the many other philosophic historians of this literary country, various and excellent explanations of their many mischances;—of the

failure of the constitution of 1791—of the constitution of the year 3—of the constitution of the year 5—of the *charte*—of the system of 1830—and now we may add, of the Second Republic—the annotated constitution of M. Dupin;—I can't help feeling a suspicion lingering in my crude and uncultivated intellect—that some common principle is at work in all and each of these several cases—that over and above all odd mischances, so many bankruptcies a little suggest an unfitness for the trade; that besides the ingenious reasons of ingenious gentlemen, there is some lurking quality, or want of a quality, in the national character of the French nation which renders them but poorly adapted for the form and freedom and constitution which they have so often, with such zeal and so vainly, attempted to establish.

In my last letter I suggested that this might be what I ventured to call a "want of stupidity". I will now try to describe what I mean in more accurate, though not, perhaps, more intelligible words.

I believe that I am but speaking what is agreed on by competent observers, when I say that the essence of the French character is a certain mobility; that is, as it has been defined, a certain "excessive sensibility to *present* impressions," which is sometimes "levity,"—for it issues in a postponement of seemingly fixed principles to a momentary temptation or a transient whim; sometimes "impatience,"—as leading to an exaggerated sense of existing evils; often "excitement,"—a total absorption in existing emotion; oftener "inconsistency," —the sacrifice of old habits to present emergencies; and yet other unfavourable qualities. But it has also its favourable side. The same man who is drawn aside from old principles by small pleasures, who can't bear pain, who forgets his old friends when he ceases to see them, who is liable in time of excitement to be a one-idea being, with no conception of anything but the one exciting object, yet who nevertheless is apt to have one idea to-day and quite another to-morrow (and this, and more than this, may, I fancy, be said of the ideal Frenchman), may and will have the subtlest perception of existing niceties, the finest susceptibility to social pleasure, the keenest tact in

social politeness, the most consummate skilfulness in the details of action and administration,—may, in short, be the best companion, the neatest man of business, the lightest *homme de salon*, the acutest diplomat of the existing world.

It is curious to observe how this reflects itself in their literature. "I will believe," remarks Montaigne, "in anything rather than in any man's consistency." What observer of English habits—what person inwardly conscious of our dull and unsusceptible English nature, would ever say so? Rather in our country obstinacy is the commonest of the vices, and perseverance the cheapest of the virtues. Again, when they attempt history, the principal peculiarity (a few exceptions being allowed for) is an utter incapacity to describe graphically a long-passed state of society. Take, for instance—assuredly no unfavourable example—M. Guizot. His books, I need not say, are nearly unrivalled for eloquence, for philosophy and knowledge; you read there, how in the middle age there were many "principles"; the principle of Legitimacy, the principle of Feudalism, the principle of Democracy; and you come to know how one grew, and another declined, and a third crept slowly on; and the mind is immensely edified, when perhaps at the 315th page a proper name occurs, and you mutter, "Dear me, why, if there were not *people* in the time of Charlemagne! Who would have thought that?" But in return for this utter incapacity to describe the people of past times, a Frenchman has the gift of perfectly describing the people of his own. No one knows so well—no one can tell so well—the facts of his own life. The French memoirs, the French letters are, and have been, the admiration of Europe. Is not now Jules Janin unrivalled at pageants and *prima donnas?*

It is the same in poetry. As a recent writer excellently remarks: "A French Dante, or Michael Angelo, or Cervantes, or Murillo, or Goethe, or Shakespeare, or Milton, we at once perceive to be a mere anomaly; a supposition which may indeed be proposed in terms, but which in reality is inconceivable and impossible". Yet, in requital as it were of this great deficiency, they have a wonderful capacity for expressing and delineating the poetical and voluptuous element of everyday

life. We know the biography of De Béranger. The young ladies whom he has admired—the wine that he has preferred —the fly that buzzed on the ceiling, and interrupted his delicious and dreaming solitude, are as well known to us as the recollections of our own lives. As in their common furniture, so in their best poetry. The materials are nothing; reckon up what you have been reading, and it seems a *congeries* of stupid trifles; begin to read,—the skill of the workmanship is so consummate, the art so high and so latent, that while time flows silently on, our fancies are enchanted and our memories indelibly impressed. How often, asks Mr. Thackeray, have we read De Béranger—how often Milton? Certainly, since Horace, there has been no such manual of the philosophy of this world.

I will not say that the quality which I have been trying to delineate is exactly the same thing as "cleverness". But I do allege that it is sufficiently near it for the rough purposes of popular writing. For this *quickness* in taking in—so to speak—the present, gives a corresponding celerity of intellectual apprehension, an amazing readiness in catching new ideas and maintaining new theories, a versatility of mind which enters into and comprehends everything as it passes, a concentration in what occurs, so as to use it for every purpose of illustration, and consequently (if it happen to be combined with the least fancy), quick repartee on the subject of the moment, and *bons-mots* also without stint and without end—and these qualities are rather like what we style cleverness. And what I call a proper stupidity keeps a man from all the defects of this character; it chains the gifted possessor mainly to his old ideas; it takes him seven weeks to comprehend an atom of a new one; it keeps him from being led away by new theories—for there is nothing which bores him so much; it restrains him within his old pursuits, his well-known habits, his tried expedients, his verified conclusions, his traditional beliefs. He is not tempted to "levity," or "impatience," for he does not see the joke, and is thick-skinned to present evils. Inconsistency puts him out,—"What I says is this here, as I was saying yesterday," is his notion of historical eloquence and habitual discretion. He is very slow indeed to be "excited,"—his passions,

his feelings, and his affections are dull and tardy strong things, falling in a certain known direction, fixing on certain known objects, and for the most part acting in a moderate degree, and at a sluggish pace. You always know where to find his mind.

Now this is exactly what, in politics at least, you do not know about a Frenchman. I like—I have heard a good judge say—to hear a Frenchman talk. He strikes a light, but what light he will strike it is impossible to predict. I think he doesn't know himself. Now, I know you see at once how this would operate on a Parliamentary Government, but I give you a gentle illustration. All England knows Mr. Disraeli, the witty orator, the exceedingly clever *littérateur*, the versatile politician; and all England has made up its mind that the stupidest country gentleman would be a better Home Secretary than the accomplished descendant of the "Caucasian race". Now suppose, if you only can, a House of Commons all Disraelis, and do you imagine that Parliament would work? It would be what M. Proudhon said of some French assemblies, "a box of matches".

The same quality acts in another way, and produces to English ideas a most marvellous puzzle, both in the philosophical literature and the political discussion of the French. I mean their passion for logical deduction. The habitual mode of argument is to get hold of some large principle; to begin to deduce immediately; and to reason down from it to the most trivial details of common action. *Il faut être conséquent avec soi-même*—is their fundamental maxim; and in a world the essence of which is compromise, they could not well have a worse. I hold, metaphysically perhaps, that this is a consequence of that same impatience of disposition to which I have before alluded. Nothing is such a bore as looking for your principles—nothing so pleasant as working them out. People who have thought, know that inquiry is suffering. A child stumbling timidly in the dark is not more different from the same child playing on a sunny lawn, than is the philosopher groping, hesitating, doubting and blundering about his primitive postulates, from the same philosopher proudly deducing and commenting on the certain consequences of his established convictions. On

this account Mathematics have been called the paradise of the mind. In Euclid at least, you have your principles, and all that is required is acuteness in working them out. The long annals of science are one continued commentary on this text. Read in Bacon, the beginner of intellectual philosophy in England, and every page of the *Advancement of Learning* is but a continued warning against the tendency of the human mind to start at once to the last generalities from a few and imperfectly observed particulars. Read in the *Méditations* of Descartes, the beginner of intellectual philosophy in France, and in every page (once I read five) you will find nothing but the strictest, the best, the most lucid, the most logical deduction of all things actual and possible, from a few principles obtained without evidence, and retained in defiance of probability. Deduction is a game, and induction a grievance. Besides, clever impatient people want not only to learn, but to teach. And instruction expresses at least the alleged possession of knowledge. The obvious way is to shorten the painful, the slow, the tedious, the wearisome process of preliminary inquiry —to assume something pretty—to establish its consequences —discuss their beauty—exemplify their importance—extenuate their absurdities. A little vanity helps all this. Life is short—art is long—truth lies deep—take some side—found your school—open your lecture-rooms—tuition is dignified—learning is low.

I do not know that I can exhibit the way these qualities of the French character operate on their opinions, better than by telling you how the Roman Catholic Church deals with them. I have rather attended to it since I came here; it gives sermons almost an interest, their being in French—and to those curious in intellectual matters it is worth observing. In other times, and even now in out-of-the-way Spain I suppose it may be so, the Catholic Church was opposed to inquiry and reasoning. But it is not so now, and here. Loudly—from the pens of a hundred writers—from the tongues of a thousand pulpits—in every note of thrilling scorn and exulting derision, she proclaims the contrary. Be she Christ's workman, or Anti-Christ's, she knows her work too well.—"Reason, Reason,

Reason!"—exclaims she to the philosophers of this world —"Put in practice what you teach, if you would have others believe it; be consistent; do not prate to us of private judgment when you are but yourselves repeating what you heard in the nursery—ill-mumbled remnants of a Catholic tradition. No! exemplify what you command, inquire and make search —seek, though we warn you that ye will never find—yet do as ye will. Shut yourself up in a room—make your mind a blank—go down (as ye speak) into the 'depths of your consciousness'—scrutinise the mental structure—inquire for the elements of belief—spend years, your best years, in the occupation; and at length—when your eyes are dim, and your brain hot, and your hand unsteady—then reckon what you have gained: see if you cannot count on your fingers the certainties you have reached: reflect which of them you doubted yesterday, which you may disbelieve to-morrow; or rather, make haste—assume at random some essential *credenda* —write down your inevitable postulates—enumerate your necessary axioms—toil on, toil on—spin your spider's web—adore your own souls—or, if you prefer it, choose some German nostrum—try the intellectual intuition, or the 'pure reason,' or the 'intelligible' ideas, or the mesmeric *clairvoyance*— and when so or somehow you have attained your results, try them on mankind. Don't go out into the highways and hedges—it's unnecessary. Ring the bell—call in the servants—give them a course of lectures—cite Aristotle—review Descartes—panegyrise Plato—and see if the *bonne* will understand you. It is you that say '*Vox populi—Vox Dei*'; but you see the people reject you. Or, suppose you succeed—what you call succeeding—your books are read; for three weeks, or even a season, you are the idol of the *salons;* your hard words are on the lips of women; then a change comes—a new actress appears at the Théâtre Français or the Opéra—her charms eclipse your theories; or a great catastrophe occurs—political liberty (it is said) is annihilated—*il faut se faire mouchard*, is the observation of scoffers. Anyhow, *you* are forgotten— fifty years may be the gestation of a philosophy, not three its life—before long, before you go to your grave, your six disciples

leave you for some newer master, or to set up for themselves. The poorest priest in the remote region of the Basses Alpes has more power over men's souls than human cultivation; his ill-mouthed masses move women's souls—can you? Ye scoff at Jupiter. Yet he at least was believed in—you never have been; idol for idol, the *de*throned is better than the *un*throned. No, if you would reason—if you would teach—if you would speculate, come to us. We have our *premises* ready; years upon years before you were born, intellects whom the best of you delight to magnify, toiled to systematise the creed of ages; years upon years after you are dead, better heads than yours will find new matter there to define, to divide, to arrange. Consider the hundred volumes of Aquinas—which of you desire a higher life than that? To deduce, to subtilise, discriminate, systematise, and decide the highest truth, and to be believed. Yet such was his luck, his enjoyment. He was what you would be. No, no—*Credite, credite.* Ours is the life of speculation—the cloister is the home for the student. Philosophy is stationary—Catholicism progressive. You call—we are heard," etc., etc., etc. So speaks each preacher according to his ability. And when the dust and noise of present controversies have passed away, and in the silence of the night, some grave historian writes out the tale of half-forgotten times, let him not forget to observe that skilfully as the mediæval Church subdued the superstitious cravings of a painful and barbarous age—in after-years she dealt more discerningly still with the feverish excitement, the feeble vanities, and the dogmatic impatience of an over-intellectual generation.

And as in religion—so in politics, we find the same desire to teach rather than to learn—the same morbid appetite for exhaustive and original theories. It is as necessary for a public writer to have a system as it is for him to have a pen. His course is obvious; he assumes some grand principle—the principle of Legitimacy, or the principle of Equality, or the principle of Fraternity—and thence he reasons down without fear or favour to the details of everyday politics. Events are judged of, not by their relation to simple causes, but by their bearing on a remote axiom. Nor are these speculations mere

exercises of philosophic ingenuity. Four months ago, hundreds of able writers were debating with the keenest ability and the most ample array of generalities, whether the country should be governed by a Legitimate Monarchy, or an illegitimate; by a Social, or an old-fashioned Republic; by a two-chambered Constitution, or a one-chambered Constitution; on "Revision," or Non-revision; on the claims of Louis Napoleon, or the divine right of the national representation. Can any intellectual food be conceived more dangerous or more stimulating for an over-excitable population? It is the same in Parliament. The description of the Church of Corinth may stand for a description of the late Assembly: every one had a psalm, had a doctrine, had a tongue, had a revelation, had an interpretation. Each member of the Mountain had his scheme for the regeneration of mankind; each member of the vaunted majority had his scheme for newly consolidating the Government; Orleanist hated Legitimist, Legitimist Orleanist; moderate Republican detested undiluted Republican; scheme was set against scheme, and theory against theory. No two Conservatives would agree what to conserve; no Socialist could practically associate with any other. No deliberative assembly can exist with every member wishing to lead, and no one wishing to follow. Not the meanest Act of Parliament could be carried without more compromise than even the best French statesmen were willing to use on the most important and critical affairs of their country. Rigorous reasoning would not manage a parish vestry, much less a great nation. In England, to carry half your own crotchets, you must be always and everywhere willing to carry half another man's. Practical men must submit as well as rule, concede as well as assume. Popular government has many forms, a thousand good modes of procedure; but no one of those modes can be worked, no one of those forms will endure, unless by the continual application of sensible heads and pliable judgments to the systematic criticism of stiff axioms, rigid principles, and incarnated propositions. I am, etc.,

AMICUS.

P.S.—I was in hopes that I should have been able to tell you of the withdrawal of the decree relative to the property of the Orleans family. The withdrawal was announced in the *Constitutionnel* of yesterday; but I regret to add was contradicted in the *Patrie* last evening. I need not observe to you that it is an act for which there is no defence, moral or political. It has immensely weakened the Government.

The change of Ministry is also a great misfortune to Louis Napoleon. M. de Morny, said to be a son of Queen Hortense (if you believe the people in the *salons*, the President is not the son of his father, and everybody else is the son of his mother), was a statesman of the class best exemplified in England by the late Lord Melbourne—an acute, witty, fashionable man, acquainted with Parisian persons and things, and a consummate judge of public opinion. M. Persigny was in exile with the President, is said to be much attached to him, to repeat his sentiments and exaggerate his prejudices. I need not point out which of the two is just now the sounder counsellor.

Letter V.

ON THE CONSTITUTION OF THE PRINCE-PRESIDENT.

Sir,—The many failures of the French in the attempt to establish a predominantly Parliamentary Government have a strong family likeness. Speaking a little roughly, I shall be right in saying that the Constitutions of France have perished, both lately and formerly, either in a street-row or under the violence of a military power, aided and abetted by a diffused dread of impending street-rows, and a painful experience of the effects of past ones. Thus the Constitution of 1791 (the first of the old series) perished on 10th August, amid the exultation of the brewer Santerre. The last of the old series fell on the 18 Brumaire, under the hands of Napoleon, when the 5 per cents. were at 12, the whole country in disorder, and all ruinable persons ruined. The Monarchy of 1830 began in the riot of the three days, and ended in the riot of 24th February; the Republic of February perished but yesterday,

mainly from terror that Paris might again see such days as the "days of June".

I think all sensible Englishmen who review this history (the history of more than sixty years) will not be slow to divine a conclusion peculiarly agreeable to our orderly national habits, *viz.*, that the first want of the French is somebody or something able and willing to keep down street-rows, to repress the frightful elements of revolution and disorder which, every now and then, astonish Europe; capable of maintaining, and desirous to maintain, the order and tranquillity which are (all agree) the essential and primary prerequisites of industry and civilisation. If any one seriously and calmly doubts this, I am afraid nothing that I can further say will go far in convincing him. But let him read the account of any scene in any French revolution, old or new, or, better, let him come here and learn how people look back to the time I have mentioned (to June, 1848), when the Socialists,—not under speculative philosophers like Proudhon or Louis Blanc, but under practical rascals and energetic murderers, like Sobrier and Caussidière—made their last and final stand, and against them, on the other side, the National Guard (mostly solid shopkeepers, three-parts ruined by the events of February) fought (I will not say bravely or valiantly, but) furiously, frantically, savagely, as one reads in old books that half-starved burgesses in beleaguered towns have sometimes fought for the food of their children; let any sceptic hear of the atrocities of the friends of order and the atrocities of the advocates of disorder, and he will, I imagine, no longer be sceptical on two points,—he will hope that if he ever have to fight it will not be with a fanatic Socialist, nor against a demi-bankrupt fighting for "his shop"; and he will admit, that in a country subject to collisions between two such excited and excitable combatants, no earthly blessing is in any degree comparable to a power which will stave off, long delay, or permanently prevent, the actual advent and ever-ready apprehension of such bloodshed. I therefore assume that the first condition of good government in this country is a really strong, a reputedly strong, a continually strong Executive power.

Now, on the face of matters, it is certainly true that such a power is perfectly consistent with the most perfect, the most ideal type of Parliamentary Government. Rather I should say, such and so strong an executive is a certain consequence of the existence of that ideal and rarely found type. If there is among the people, and among their representatives, a strong, a decided, an unflinching preference for particular Ministers, or a particular course of policy, that course of policy can be carried out, and will be carried out, as certainly as by the Czar Nicholas, whose Ministers can do exactly what they will. There was something very like this in the old days of King George III., of Mr. Pitt, and Mr. Perceval. In those times, I have been told, the great Treasury official of the day, Mr. George Rose (still known to the readers of Sydney Smith) had a habit of observing, upon occasion of anything utterly devoid of decent defence: "Well, well, this *is* a little too bad; we must apply our *majority* to this difficulty". The effect is very plain; while Mr. George Rose and his betters respected certain prejudices and opinions, then all but universal in Parliament, they in all other matters might do precisely what they would; and in all out-of-the-way matter, in anything that Sir John could not understand, on a point of cotton-spinning or dissent, be as absolute as the Emperor Napoleon. But the case is (as we know by experience of what passes under our daily observation) immensely altered, when there is no longer this strong, compact, irrefragable "following," no distinctly divided, definite faction, no regular opposition to be daily beaten, no regular official party to be always victorious —but, instead, a mere aggregate of "independent members," each thinking for himself, propounding, as the case may be, his own sense or his own nonsense—one, profound ideas applicable to all time; another, something meritorious from the Eton Latin Grammar, and a mangled republication of the morning's newspaper; some exceedingly philosophical, others only crotchety, but, what is my point, each acting on his own head, assuming not Mr. Pitt's infallibility, but his own. Again, divide a political assembly into three parties, any two of which are greater than the third, and it will be always possible for

an adroit and dexterous intriguer (M. Thiers has his type in most assemblies) to combine, three or four times a fortnight, the two opposition parties into a majority on some interesting question—on some matter of importance. The best government possible under the existing circumstances will be continually and, in a hazardous state of society, even desperately and fatally weakened. We have had in our sensible House of Commons—aye, and among the most stupid and sensible portion of it, the country gentlemen—within these few years a striking example of how far party zeal, the heat of disputation, and a strong desire for a deep revenge, will carry the best-intentioned politicians in destroying the executive efficiency of an obnoxious Government. I mean the division of the House of Commons on the Irish Army Bill which ended in the resignation of Sir Robert Peel. You remember on that occasion the country party, under the guidance of Lord G. Bentinck, in the teeth of the Irish policy which they had been advocating and supporting all their lives, and which they would advocate and support again now, in the teeth of their previous votes, and (I am not exaggerating the history) almost of their avowed present convictions, defeated a Government, not on a question of speculative policy or recondite importance, but upon the precautionary measures necessary (according to every idea that a Tory esquire is capable of entertaining) for preventing a rebellion, the occurrence of which they were told (and as the event proved, told truly) might be speedy, hourly, and immediate. Of course I am not giving any opinion of my own about the merits of the question. The Whigs may be right; it may be good to have shown the world how little terrible is the bluster of Irish agitation. But I cite the event as a striking example of an essential evil in a three-sided Parliamentary system, as practically showing that a generally well-meaning opposition will, in defiance of their own habitual principles, cripple an odious executive, even in a matter of street-rows and rebellions. I won't weary you with tediously pointing the moral. If such things are done in the green tree, what may be done in the dry? If party zeal and disputatious excitement so hurry men away in our own grave business-

like experienced country—what may we expect from a vain, a volatile, an ever-changing race?

Nor am I drawing a French Assembly from mere history, or from my own imagination. In the late Chamber, the great subject of the very last *Annual Register*, there are not only three parties but four. There was a perpetually shifting element of 200 members, calling itself the Mountain, which had in its hands the real casting vote between the President's Government and the Constitutional opposition. In the very last days of the Constitution they voted against, and thereby negatived, the proposition of the questors for arming the Assembly; partly because they disliked General Changarnier, and detested General Cavaignac; partly because, being extreme Socialists, they would not arm anybody who was likely to use his arms against their friends on the barricades. The same party was preparing to vote for the Bill on the Responsibility of the President, actually, and according to the design of its promoters, in the nature of a bill of indictment against him, because they feared his rigour and efficiency in repressing the anticipated convulsion. The question, the critical question, *Who* shall prevent a new revolution? was thus actually, and owing to the lamentable divisions of the friends of order, in the hands of the Parliamentary representatives of the very men who wished to affect that revolution, was determined, I may say, ultimately and in the last resort by the party of disorder.

Nor on lesser questions was there any steady majority, any distinctive deciding faction, any administering phalanx, anybody regularly voting with anybody else, often enough, or in number enough, to make the legislative decision regular, consistent, or respectable. Their very debates were unseemly. On anything not pleasing to them, the Mountain (as I said) a yellow and fanatical generation—had (I am told) an engaging knack of rising *en masse* and screaming until they were tired. It will be the same, I do not say in degree (for the Mountain would certainly lose several votes now, and the numbers of the late Chamber were unreasonably and injudiciously large), but, in a measure, you will be always subject to the same dis-

order—a fluctuating majority, and a minority, often a ruling minority, favourable to rebellion. The cause, as I believe, is to be sought in the peculiarities of the French character, on which I dwelt, prolixly, I fear, and *ad nauseam*, in my last two letters. If you have to deal with a *mobile*, a clever, a versatile, an intellectual, a dogmatic nation, inevitably, and by necessary consequence, you will have conflicting systems—every man speaking his own words, and always giving his own suffrage to what seems good in his own eyes—many holding to-day what they will regret to-morrow—a crowd of crotchety theories and a heavy percentage of philosophical nonsense—a great opportunity for subtle stratagem and intriguing selfishness—a miserable division among the friends of tranquillity, and a great power thrown into the hands of those who, though often with the very best intentions, are practically, and in matter of fact, opposed both to society and civilisation. And, moreover, beside minor inconveniences and lesser hardships, you will indisputably have periodically—say three or four times in fifty years—a great crisis; the public mind much excited, the people in the streets swaying to and fro with the breath of every breeze, the discontented *ouvriers* meeting in a hundred knots, discussing their real sufferings and their imagined grievances, with lean features and angry gesticulations; the Parliament, all the while in permanence, very ably and eloquently expounding the whole subject, one man proposing this scheme, and another that; the Opposition expecting to oust the Ministers, and ride in on the popular commotion; the Ministers fearing to take the odium of severe or adequate repressive measures, lest they should lose their salary, their places and their majority: finally, a great crash, a disgusted people, overwhelmed by revolutionary violence, or seeking a precarious, a pernicious, but after all a precious protection from the bayonets of military despotism. Louis Philippe met these dangers and difficulties in a thoroughly characteristic manner. He bought his majority. Being a practical and not over sentimental public functionary, he went into the market and purchased a sufficient number of constituencies and members. Of course the *convenances* were carefully preserved; grossness of any

kind is too jarring for French susceptibility; the purchase money was not mere coin (which indeed the buyers had not to offer), but a more gentlemanly commodity—the patronage of the Government. The electoral colleges were extremely small, the number of public functionaries is enormous; so that a very respectable body of electors could always be expected to have, like a four-year-old barrister (since the County Courts), an immense prejudice for the existing Government. One man hoped to be *Maire*, another wanted his son got into St. Cyr or the Polytechnic School, and this could be got, and was daily got (I am writing what is hardly denied), by voting for the Government candidate. In a word, a sufficient proportion of the returns of the electoral colleges resembled the returns from Harwich or Devonport, only that the Government was the only bidder; for there are not, I fancy, in any country but England, people able and willing to spend, election after election, great sums of money for procuring the honour of a seat in a representative assembly. In fact, to copy the well-known phrase, just as in the time of Burke, certain gentlemen had the expressive nickname of the King's friends, so these constituencies may aptly be called the King's constituencies. Of course, on the face of it, this system worked, as far as business went, excellently well. For eighteen years the tranquillity was maintained. France, it may be, has never enjoyed so much calm civilisation, so much private happiness; and yet, after all such and so long blessings, it fell in a mere riot —it fell unregretted. It is a system which no wise man can wish to see restored; it was a system of regulated corruption.

But it does not at all follow, nor I am sure will you be apt so to deduce, that because I imagine that France is unfit for a Government in which a House of Commons is, as with us, the sovereign power in the State, I therefore believe that it is fit for no freedom at all. Our own constitutional history is the completest answer to any such idea. For centuries, the House of Commons was habitually, we know, but a third-rate power in the State. First the Crown, then the House of Lords, enjoyed the ordinary and supreme dominion; and down almost to our own times the Crown and House of Lords, taken together,

were much more than a sufficient match for the people's House; but yet we do not cease to proclaim, daily and hourly, in season and out of season, that the English people never have been slaves. It may, therefore, well be that our own country having been free under a Constitution in which the representative element was but third-rate in power and dignity, France and other nations may contrive to enjoy the advantage from institutions in which it is only second-rate.

Now, of this sort is the Constitution of Louis Napoleon. I am not going now, after prefacing so much, to discuss its details; indeed, I do not feel competent to do so. What should we say to a Frenchman's notion of a £5 householder, or the fourth and fifth clauses of the New Reform Bill? and I quite admit that a paper building of this sort can hardly be safely criticised till it is carried out on *terra firma*, till we see not only the theoretic ground-plan, but the actual inhabited structure. The life of a constitution is in the spirit and disposition of those who work it; and we can't yet say in the least what that, in this case, will be; but so far as the constitution shows its meaning on the face of it, it clearly belongs to the class which I have named. The *Corps Législatif* is not the administering body, it is not even what perhaps it might with advantage have been, a petitioning and remonstrating body; but it possesses the Legislative veto, and the power of stopping *en masse* the supplies. It is not a working, a ruling, or an initiative, or supremely decisive, but an immense checking power. It will be unable to change Ministers, or aggravate the course of revolutions; but it could arrest an unpopular war—it could reject an unpopular law—it is, at least in theory, a powerful and important drag-chain. Out of the mouths of its adversaries this system possesses what I have proved, or conjectured, or assumed to be the prime want of the French nation—a strong executive. The objection to it is that the objectors find nothing else in it. We confess there is no doubt now of a power adequate to repress street-rows and revolutions.

At the same time, I guard myself against intimating any opinion on the particular *minutiæ* of this last effort of institu-

tional invention. I do not know enough to form a judgment; I sedulously, at present, confine myself to this one remark, that the new Government of France belongs, in theory at least, to the right class of Constitutions—the class that is most exactly suited to French habits, French nature, French social advantages, French social dangers—the class I mean, in which the representative body has a consultative, a deliberative, a checking and a minatory—not as with us a supreme, nearly an omnipotent, and exclusively initiatory function.

I am, yours, etc.,

AMICUS.

P.S.—You may like five words on a French invasion. I can't myself imagine, and what is more to the point, I do not observe that anybody here has any notion of, any such inroad into England as was contemplated and proposed by General Changarnier. No one in the actual conduct of affairs, with actual responsibility for affairs, not, as the event proved, even Ledru Rollin, could, according to me, encounter the risk and odium of such a hateful and horribly dangerous attempt. But, I regret to add, there is a contingency which sensible people here (so far as I have had the means of judging) do not seem to regard as at all beyond the limits of rational probability, by which a war between England and France would most likely be superinduced; that is, a French invasion of Belgium. I do not mean to assure you that this week or next the Prince-President will make a razzia in Brussels. But I do mean that it is thought not improbable that somehow or other, on some wolf-and-the-lamb pretext, he may pick a quarrel with King Leopold, and endeavour to restore to the French the "natural limit" of the Rhine. Now, I have never seen the terms of the guarantee which the shrewd and cautious Leopold exacted from England before he would take the throne of Belgium, but as the only real risk was a French aggression upon this tempting territory, I do not make any doubt but that the expressions of that instrument bind us to go to war in defence of the country whose limits and independence we have guaranteed. And in this case, an invasion of England would be as admis-

sible a military movement as an invasion of France. I hope, therefore, you will use your best rhetoric to induce people to put our pleasant country in a state of adequate and tolerable defence.

I see by the invaluable *Galignani*, that some excellent people at Manchester are indulging in a little arithmetic. "Suppose," say they, "all the French got safe, and each took away £50, now how much do you fancy it would come to (40,000 men by £50, nought's nought is nought, nought and carry two)—compared to the *existing* burden of the National Debt? Was there ever such amiable infatuation! It is not what the French could carry off, but what they would leave behind them, which is in the reasonable apprehension of reasonable persons. The funds at 50—broken banks—the *Gazette* telling you who had *not* failed—Downing Street *vide* Wales—destitute families, dishonoured daughters, one-legged fathers—the mourning shops utterly sacked—the customers in tears—a pale widow in a green bonnet—the Exchange in ruins—five notches on St. Paul's—and a big hole in the Bank of England;—these, though but a few of the certain consequences of a French visit to London, are quite enough to terrify even an adamantine editor and a rather reckless correspondent.

Letter VI.

THE FRENCH NEWSPAPER PRESS.

Paris, 10*th Feb.*

Sir,—We learn from an Oriental narrative in considerable circulation, that the ancient Athenians were fond of news. Of course they were. It is in the nature of a mass of clever and intellectual people living together to want something to talk about. Old ideas—common ascertained truths—are good things enough to live by, but are very rare, and soon sufficiently discussed. Something else—true or false, rational or nonsensical—is quite essential; and, therefore, in the old literary world men gathered round the travelling sophist, to learn from him some thought, crotchet, or speculation. And

what the vagabond speculators were once, that, pretty exactly, is the newspaper now. To it the people of this intellectual capital look for that daily mental bread, which is as essential to them as the less ethereal sustenance of ordinary mortals. With the spread of education this habit travels downward. Not the literary man only, but the *ouvrier* and the *bourgeois*, live on the same food. This day's *Siècle* is discussed not only in gorgeous drawing-rooms, but in humble reading-rooms, and still humbler workshops. According to the printed notions of us journalists, this is a matter of pure rejoicing. The influence of the Press, if you believe writers and printers, is the one sufficient condition of social well-being. Yet there are many considerations which make very much against this idea: I can't go into several of them now, but those that I shall mention are suggested at once by matters before me. First, newspaper people are the only traders that thrive upon convulsion. In quiet times, who cares for the paper? In times of tumult, who does not? Commonly, the *Patrie* (the *Globe* of this country) sells, I think, for three sous: on the evening of the *coup d'état*, itinerant ladies were crying under my window, "*Demandez la* Patrie—*Journal du soir—trente sous—Journal du soir*"; and I remember witnessing, even in our sober London, in February, 1848, how bald fathers of families paid large sums, and encountered bare-headed the unknown inclemencies of the night air, that they might learn the last news of Louis Philippe, and, if possible, be in at the death of the revolutionary Parisians. "Happy," says the sage, "are the people whose annals are vacant;" but "woe! woe! woe!" he might add, "to the wretched journalists that have to compose and sell leading articles therein."

I am constrained to say that, even in England, this is not without its unfavourable influence on literary morals. Take in the *Times*, and you will see it assumed that every year ought to be an era. "The Government does nothing," is the indignant cry, and simple people in the country don't know that this is merely a civilised *façon de parler* for "I have nothing to say". Lord John Russell must alter the suffrage, that we may have something pleasant in our columns.

I am afraid matters are worse here. The leading French journalist is, as you know, the celebrated Emile de Girardin, and, so far as I can learn anything about him, he is one of the most fickle politicians in existence. Since I have read the *Presse* regularly, it has veered from every point of the compass well-nigh to every other—now for, now against, the revision of the constitution—now lauding Louis Napoleon to the skies —now calling him plain M. Bonaparte, and insinuating that he had not two ideas, and was incapable of moral self-government—now connected with the Red party, now praising the majority; but all and each of these veerings and shiftings determined by one most simple and certain principle—to keep up the popular excitement, to maintain the gifted M. de Girardin at the head of it. Now, a man who spends his life in stimulating excitement and convulsion is really a political incendiary; and however innocent and laudable his brother exiles may be, the old editor and founder of the *Presse* is, as I believe, now only paying the legitimate penalty of systematic political *arson*.

When a foreigner—at least an Englishman—begins to read the French papers, his first idea is, "How well these fellows write! Why, every one of them has a style, and a good style too. Really, how clear, how acute, how clever, how perspicuous; I wish our journalists would learn to write like this;" but a little experience will modify this idea—at least I have found it so. I read for a considerable time these witty periodicals with pleasure and admiration; after a little while I felt somehow that I took them up with an effort, but I fancied, knowing my disposition, that this was laziness; when on a sudden, in the waste of *Galignani*, I came across an article of the *Morning Herald*. Now you'll laugh at me, if I tell you it was a real enjoyment. There was no toil, no sharp theory, no pointed expression, no fatiguing brilliancy, in fact, what the man in Lord Byron desired, "no nothing,"[1] but a dull, creeping, satisfactory sensation that now, at least, there was nothing to admire. As long walking in picture galleries makes you appreciate a mere wall, so I felt that I understood for the first time that really dulness

[1] Letter to Murray, 4th June, 1817. (Forrest Morgan.)

had its interest. I found a pure refreshment in coming across what possibly might be latent sense, but was certainly superficial stupidity.

I think there is nothing we English hate like a clever but prolonged controversy. Now this is the life and soul of the Parisian press. Everybody writes against everybody. It is not mere sly hate or solemn invective, nothing like what we occasionally indulge in, about the misdemeanours of a morning contemporary. But they take the other side's article piece by piece, and comment on him, and, as they say in libel cases, *innuendo* him, and satisfactorily show that, according to his arithmetic, two and two make five; useful knowledge that. It is really good for us to know that some fellow (you never heard of him) it rather seems can't add up. But it interests people here;—*c'est logique*, they tell you; and if you are trustful enough to answer "*Mon Dieu, c'est ennuyeux, je n'en sais rien*," they look as if you sneered at the Parthenon.

It is out of these controversies that M. de Girardin has attained his power and his fame. His articles (according to me, at least) have no facts and no sense. He gives one all pure reasoning—little scrappy syllogisms; as some one said most unjustly of old Hazlitt, he "writes pimples". But let an unfortunate writer in the *Assemblée Nationale*, or anywhere else, make a little refreshing blunder in his logic, and next morning small punning sentences (one to each paragraph like an equation) come rattling down on him: it is clear as noonday that somebody said "something followed," and it does *not* follow, and it is so agreed in all the million *cabinets de lecture* after due gesticulation; and, moreover, that M. de Girardin is the man to expose it, and what clever fellows they are to appreciate him; but what the truth is, who cares? The subject is forgotten.

Now all this, to my notion, does great harm. Nothing destroys commonplace like the habit of arguing for arguing's sake; nothing is so bad for public matters as that they should be treated, not as the data for the careful formation of a sound judgment, but as a topic or background for displaying the shining qualities of public writers. It is no light thing this,

M. de Girardin for many years has gained more power, more reputation, more money than any of his rivals; not because he shows more knowledge—he shows much less; not because he has a wiser judgment—he has no fixed judgment at all; but because he has a more pointed, sharp way of exposing blunders, intrinsically paltry, obvious to all educated men; and does not care enough for any subject to be diverted from this logical trifling by a serious desire to convince anybody of anything.

Don't think I wish to be hard on this accomplished gentleman. I am not going to require of hack-writers to write only on what they understand—if that were the law, what a life for the sub-editor; I should not be writing these letters, and how seldom and how timidly would the morning journals creep into the world. Nor do I expect, though I may still, in sentimental moods, desire, middle-aged journalists to be buoyed up by chimerical visions of improving mankind.

You know what our eminent *chef* (by Thackeray profanely called Jupiter Jeames) has been heard to say over his gin and water, in an easy and voluptuous moment: "Enlightenment be ——, I want the fat fool of a thick-headed reader to say, 'Just *my own* views,' else he ain't pleased, and may be he stops the paper". I am not going to require supernatural excellence from writers. Yet there are limits. If I were a chemist, I should not mind, I suppose, selling now and then, a deleterious drug on a due affidavit of rats, then and there filed before me; yet I don't feel as if I could live comfortably on the sale of mere arsenic. I fancy I should like to sell something wholesome occasionally. So, though one might, upon occasion, egg on a riot, or excite to a breach of the peace, I should not like to be every day feeding on revolutionary excitement. Nor should I like to be exclusively selling diminutive, acute, quibbling leaders (what they call in the Temple special demurrers), certain to occupy people with small fallacies, and lead away their minds from the great questions actually at issue.

Sometimes I might like to feel as if I understood what I wrote on, but of course with me this indulgence must be very

rare. You know in France journalism is not only an occupation, it is a career. As in far-off Newcastle a coal-fitter's son looks wistfully to the bar, in the notion that he too may emulate the fame and fortune of Lord Eldon or Lord Stowell, so in fair Provence, a pale young aspirant packs up his little bundle in the hope of rivalling the luck and fame of M. Thiers; he comes to Paris—he begins, like the great historian, by dining for thirty sous in the Palais Royal, in the hope after long years of labour and jealousy he, too, may end by sleeping amid curtains of white muslin lined with pink damask. Just consider for a moment what a difference this one fact shows between France and England. Here a man who begins life by writing in the newspapers, has an appreciable chance of arriving to be Minister of Foreign Affairs. The class of public writers is the class from which the equivalent of Lord Aberdeen, Lord Palmerston, or Lord Granville will most likely be chosen. Well, well, under that *régime* you and I might have been important people; we might have handled a red box, we might have known what it was to have a reception, to dine with the Queen, to be respectfully mystified by the *corps diplomatique*. But angry Jove forbade—of course we can hardly deny that he was wrong—and yet if the revolutions of 1848 have clearly brought out any fact, it is the utter failure of newspaper statesmen. Everywhere they have been tried: everywhere they have shown great talents for intrigue, eloquence, and agitation—how rarely have they shown even fair aptitude for ordinary administration; how frequently have they gained a disreputable renown by a laxity of principle surpassing the laxity of their aristocratic and courtly adversaries! Such being my imperfect account of my imperfect notions of the French press, I can't altogether sympathise in the extreme despondency of many excellent persons at its temporary silence since the *coup d'état*. I might even rejoice at it, if I thought that the Parisian public could in any manner be broken of their dependence on the morning's article. But I have no such hope; the taste has got down too deep into the habits of the people; some new thing will still be necessary; and every Government will find some of its most formidable difficulties in their taste for political dispu-

tation and controversial excitement. The ban must sooner or later be taken off; the President sooner or later must submit to censure and ridicule, and whatever laws he may propose about the press, there is none which scores of ingenious men—now animated by the keenest hatred, will not try every hazard to evade. What he may do to avoid this is as yet unknown. One thing, however, I suppose is pretty sure, and I fancy quite wise. The press will be restrained from discussing the principles of the Government. Socialists will not be allowed to advocate a Democratic Republic. Legitimists will not be allowed to advocate the cause of Henri Cinq, nor Orleanists the cause of the Comte de Paris. Such indulgence might be tolerable in more temperate countries, but experience shows that it is not safe now and here.

A really sensible press, arguing temperately after a clear and satisfactory exposition of the facts, is a great blessing in any country. It will be still more a blessing in a country where, as I tried to explain formerly, the representative element must play (if the public security is to be maintained) a rather secondary part. It would then be a real stimulus to deliberate inquiry and rational judgment upon public affairs; to the formation of common-sense views upon the great outlines of public business; to the cultivation of sound moral opinions and convictions on the internal and international duties of the State. Even the actual press which we may expect to see here, may not be pernicious. It will doubtless stimulate to many factious proceedings, and many interruptions of the public prosperity; it may very likely conduce to drive the President (contrary, if not to his inclination, at least to his personal interest) into foreign hostilities and international aggression; but it may be, notwithstanding, useful in preventing private tyranny, in exposing wanton oppression, in checking long-suffering revenge; it may prevent acts of spoliation like what they call here *le premier vol de l'aigel*—the seizure of the Orleans property;—in a word, being certain to oppose the executive, where the latter is unjust its enemy will be just.

I had hopes that this letter would be the last with which

I should tease you; but I find I must ask you to be so kind as to find room for one, and only for one more.

I am, yours, etc.,

AMICUS.

LETTER VII.

CONCLUDING LETTER.

PARIS, 19*th Feb.*, 1852.

SIR,—There is a story of some Swedish Abbé, in the last century, who wrote an elaborate work to prove the then constitution of his country to be immortal and indestructible. While he was correcting the proof sheets, a friend brought him word that—behold! the King had already destroyed the said polity. "Sir," replied the gratified author, "our Sovereign, the illustrious Gustavus, may certainly overthrow the Constitution, but never *my book*." I beg to parody this sensible remark; for I wish to observe to you, that even though Louis Napoleon should turn out a bad and mischievous ruler, he won't in the least refute these letters.

What I mean is as follows. Above all things, I have designed to prove to you that the French are by character unfit for a solely and predominantly Parliamentary Government; that so many and so great elements of convulsion exist here, that it will be clearly necessary that a strong, vigorous, anti-barricade executive should, at whatever risk and cost, be established and maintained; that such an Assembly as the last is irreconcilable with this; in a word, that riots and revolutions must, if possible, come to an end, and only such a degree of liberty and democracy be granted to the French nation, as is consistent with the consolidated existence of the order and tranquillity which are equally essential to rational freedom and civilised society.

In order to combine the maintenance of order and tranquillity with the maximum of possible liberty, I hope that it may in the end be found possible to admit into a political system a representative and sufficiently democratic Assembly, without that Assembly assuming and arrogating to itself those

nearly omnipotent powers, which in our country it properly and rightfully possesses, but which in the history of the last sixty years, we have, as it seems to me, so many and so cogent illustrations that a French Chamber is, by genius and constitution, radically incapable to hold and exercise. I hope that some checking, consultative, petitioning Assembly—some *βουλή*, in the real sense of the term—some *Council*, some provision by which all grave and deliberate public opinion (I do not speak more definitely, because an elaborate Constitution, from a foreigner, must be an absurdity) may organise and express itself—yet at the same time, without utterly hampering and directing—and directing amiss—those more simple elements of national polity on which we must, after all, rely for the prompt and steady repression of barricade-making and bloodshed.

I earnestly desire to believe that some such system as this may be found in practice possible; for otherwise, unless I quite misread history, and altogether mistake what is under my eyes, after many more calamities, many more changes, many more great Assemblies abounding in Vergniauds and Berryers, the essential deficiencies of debating Girondin statesmen will become manifest, the uncompact, unpractical, over-volatile, over-logical, indecisive, ineffectual rule of Gallican Parliaments will be unequivocally manifest (it is *now* plain, I imagine, but a truth so humiliating must be written large in letters of blood before those that run will read it), and no medium being held or conceived to be possible, the nation will sink back, not contented but discontented, not trustfully but distrustfully, under the rule of a military despot; and if they yield to this, it will be from no faith, no loyalty, no credulity; it will be from a sense—a hated sense—of unqualified failure, a miserable scepticism in the probable success and the possible advantages of long-tried and ill-tried rebellion.

Now, whether the Constitution of Louis Napoleon is calculated to realise this ideal and intermediate system, is, till we see it at work, doubtful and disputable. It is not the question so much of what it may be at this moment, as of what it may become in a brief period, when things have begun to assume

a more normal state, and the public mind shall be relaxed from its present and painful tension. However, I should be deceiving you, if I did not inform you that the state of men's minds towards the Prince-President is not, so far as I can make it out, what it was the day after the *coup d'état*. The measures taken against the Socialists are felt to have been several degrees too severe; the list of exiles too numerous; the confiscation of the Orleans property could not but be attended with the worst effect; the law announced by the Government organs respecting or rather against the Press, is justly (though you know from my last letter I have no partiality for French newspapers) considered to be absurdly severe, and likely to countenance much tyranny and gross injustice; above all, instead of maintaining mere calm and order, the excessive rigour, and sometimes the injustice, of the President's measures, have produced a breathless pause (if I may so speak) in public opinion; political conversation is a whispered question, what will he do next? Firstly, the Government is dull, and the French want to be amused; secondly, it is going to spoil the journals (depreciate newspapers to a Frenchman, disparage nuts to a monkey); thirdly, it is producing (I do not say it has yet produced, but it has made a beginning in producing) a habit of apprehension;—in fact, I believe the French opinion of the Prince-President is near about that of the interesting damsel in George Sand's comedy, concerning her uninteresting *pretendu*: "*Vous l'aimez? n'est-ce pas?*" "*Oui, oui, oui, certainement je l'aime. Oui, oui, mille fois, oui. Je dis que oui. Je vous assure.* AU MOINS *je fais mon possible à l'aimer:*" the first attachment is not extinct, but people have begun—awful symptom—to add the withering and final saving clause. Yet it is, I imagine, a great mistake to suppose that the present Constitution, if it work at all, will permanently work as a despotism, or that the *Corps Législatif* will be without a measure of popular influence; the much more helpless *Tribunal* was not so in the much more troublesome times of the Consulate. And the source of such influence and the manner of its operation may be, I imagine, well enough traced in the nature of the forces whereby Louis Napoleon holds his power.

A truly estimable writer says, I know, "that the Legislative body cannot have, by possibility, any analogy with the consultative and petitioning senate of the Plantagenets," nor can any one deny that the likeness is extremely faint (no illustration ever yet ran on all fours), the practical differences clear and convincing. But yet, according to the light which is given me now, I affirm that for one vital purpose—the resisting and criticising any highly unpopular acts of a highly unpopular Government—the *Corps Législatif* of Louis Napoleon must, and will, inevitably possess a power compared with which the forty-day followers of the feudal *noblesse* seem as impotent as a congregation of Quakers; a force the peculiarity of which is that you can't imprison, can't dissolve, can't annihilate it—I mean, of course, the moral power of civilised opinion. You may put down newspapers, dissolve Parliaments, imprison agitators, almost stop conversation, but you can't stop thought. You can't prevent the silent, slow, creeping, stealthy progress of hatred, and scorn, and shame. You can't attenuate easily the stern justice of a retarded retaliation. These influences affect the great reservoir of physical force—they act on the army. A body of men enlisted daily from the people take to the barracks the notions of the people; in spite of new associations, the first impressions are apt to be retained; you overlay them, but they remain. What is believed elsewhere and out of doors gives them weight. Each soldier has relations, friends, a family—he knows what they think. Much more with the officers. These are men moving in Parisian society, accessible to its influences, responsible to its opinion, apt to imbibe its sentiments. Certainly *esprit de corps*—the habit of obedience, the instinct of discipline, are strong, and will carry men far; but certainly, also, they have natural limits. Men won't stand being cut, being ridiculed, being detested, being despised, daily and for ever, and that for measures which their own understandings disapprove of. Remember there is not here any question of barbarous bands overawing a civilised and imperial city; no question of ugly Croats keeping down cultivated Italians; it is but a question of French gentlemen and French peasantry in uniform acting in opposi-

tion to other French gentlemen and other French peasants without uniform. Already there has been talk (I do not say well-founded, but still the matter was named) of breaking two or three hundred officers, for speaking against the Orleans decrees. Do you fancy that can be done every day? Do you imagine that a Parliament, whatever its nominal functions may be (remember those of the old *régime*), speaking the sense of the people about the question of the day, in a time of convulsion, and in a critical hour, would not be attended to, or at any rate thought of and considered, by an army taken from the people—commanded by men selected from and every day mixing with common society and very ordinary mankind? The 2nd of December showed how readily such troops will support a decided and popular President against an intriguing, divided, impotent Chamber. But such hard blows won't bear repetition. Soldiers—French soldiers, I take it especially, from their quickness and intelligence, are neither deaf nor blind. If there be truth in history or speculation, national forces can't long be used against the nation: they are unmerciful, and often cruel to feeble minorities; they are ready now for a terrible onslaught on mere Socialists, just as of old they turned out cheerfully for awful dragonnades on the ill-starred Protestants; but once let them know and feel that everybody is against them—that they are alone, that their acts are contemned and their persons despised—and gradually, or all at once, discipline and habit surely fail, men murmur or desert, officers hesitate or disobey, one regiment is dismissed to the Cabyles, another relegated to rural solitudes; at last, most likely in the decisive moment of the whole history, the rulers, who relied only on their troops, are afraid to call them out; they hesitate, send spies and commissioners to inquire. "*Vive le Gouvernement Provisoire!*"—the black and roaring multitude rises and comes on; but two seconds, and the obnoxious institutions are lost in the flood; nothing is heard but the cry of the hour, sounding shrill and angry over the waste of Revolution—"*Vive le Diable!*" With such a force behind them, a French Parliament, of whatever nature, with whatever written duties, is, if at the head of the movement, in

the critical hour, apt to be stronger than the strongest of the Barons.

Nor do I concur with those who censure the President for "recommending" avowedly the candidates he approves. It is a part of the great question, How is universal suffrage to be worked successfully in such a country as France? The peasant proprietors have but one political idea, that they wish the Prince to govern them;—they wish to vote for the candidate most acceptable to him, and they wish nothing else. Why is he wrong in telling them which candidate that is?

Still, no doubt, the reins are now strained a great deal too tight. It is possible, quite possible, that a majority in this Parliament may be packed, but what I would impress on you is that it can't always be packed. Sooner or later constituencies who wish to oppose the Government will, in spite of *maires* and *préfets*, elect the opposition candidate: it is in the nature of any, even the least vigorous system of popular election, to struggle forwards and progressively attain to some fair and reasonable correspondence with the substantial views and opinions of the constituent people.

I therefore fall back on what I told you before—my essential view or crotchet about the mental aptitudes and deficiencies of the French people. The French, said Napoleon, are *des machines nerveuses*.

The point is, can their excitable, volatile, superficial, overlogical, uncompromising character be managed and manipulated as to fit them for entering on a practically uncontrolled system of Parliamentary Government? Will not any large and omnipotent Assembly resemble the stormy Constituent and the late Chamber, rather than the business-like, formal, ennui-diffusing Parliament to which in our free and dull country we are felicitously accustomed? Can one be so improved as to keep down a riot? I foresee a single and but a single objection. I fancy, indeed I know, that there is a school of political thinkers not yet in possession of any great influence, but, perhaps, a little on the way thereto, which has improved or invented a capital panacea, whereby all nations are, within very moderate limits of time, to be surely and certainly fitted

for political freedom; and that no matter how formed—how seemingly stable—how long ago cast and constructed, be the type of popular character to which the said remedy is sought to be applied. This panacea is the foundation or restoration of provincial municipalities. Now, I am myself prepared to go a considerable length with the school in question. I do myself think, that a due and regular consideration of the knotty points of paving and lighting, and the deciding in the last resort upon them, is a valuable discipline of national character. It exercises people's minds on points they know, in things of which there is a test. Very few people are good judges of a good Constitution; but everybody's eyes are excellent judges of good light; every man's feet are profound in the theory of agreeable stones. Yet I can't altogether admit, nevertheless, that municipalities are the sufficient and sole, though they may be very likely an essential, pre-requisite of political freedom. There is the great instance of Hindostan to the contrary. The whole old and national system of that remarkable country—a system in all probability as ancient as the era of Alexander, is a village system; and one so curious, elaborate, I fancy I might say so profound, that the best European observers—Sir Thomas Munro, and that sort of people—are most strenuous for its being retained unimpaired. According to them, the village hardly heard of the Imperial Government, except for the purpose of Imperial taxation. The business of life through that whole vast territory has always been practically determined by potails[1] and parish-vestries, and yet nevertheless and in spite of this capital and immemorial municipal system, our subjects, the Hindoos, are still slaves and still likely to be slaves; still essentially slavish, and likely, I much fear, very long indeed to remain so. It is therefore quite certain that rural and provincial institutions won't so alter and adapt all national characters, as to fit all nations for a Parliamentary Constitution; consequently, the *onus probandi* is on those who assert that it will so alter and mould the French. Again, I assure you that the French do think of paving and lighting; not enough, perhaps, but still they have begun. The country

[1] A Madras word which means a kind of village mayor.

is, as you know, divided into departments, arrondissements, and communes; in each of these there is a council, variously elected, but, in all cases, popularly and from the district, which has the sole control over the expenditure of the particular locality for every special and local purpose, and which, if I am rightly informed, has, in theory, at least, the sole initiative in every local improvement. The defect, I fancy, is that in the exercise of these, considerable bodies are hampered and controlled by the veto and supervision of the central authority. The rural councils discuss and decide what in their judgment should be then done and what money should be so spent; the better sort of the agricultural population have much more voice in the latter than have the corresponding class in England, in the determination and imposition of our own county rate; but it is the central authority which decides whether such proposals and recommendations shall in fact be carried out. In a word, the provinces have to *ask leave* of the Parisian Ministry of the Interior. Now I admit this is an abuse. I should maintain that elderly gentlemen with bald heads and local influence ought to feel that they, in the final resort, settle and determine all truly local matters. Human nature likes its own road, its own bridge, its own lapidary obstacles, its own deceptive luminosity. But I ask again, can you fancy that these luxuries, to whatever degree indulged in, alter and modify in any essential particular, the levity and volatility of the French character? How much light to how much logic? How many paving stones to how much mobility? I can't foresee any such change. And even if so, what in the meantime?

We are left then, I think, to deal with the French character pretty much as we find it. What stealthy, secret, unknown, excellent forces may, in the wisdom of Providence, be even now modifying this most curious intellectual fabric, neither you nor I can know or tell. Let us hope that they may be many. But if we indulge, and from the immense records of revolutionary history, I think, with due distrust, we may legitimately and even beneficially indulge, in system-building and speculation, we must take the *data* which we have, and

not those which we desire or imagine. Louis Napoleon has proposed a system: English writers by the thousand (if I was in harness instead of holiday-making I should be most likely among them) proclaim his system an evil one. What then? Do you know what Father Newman says to the religious reformers, rather sharply, but still well: "Make out first of all where you stand—draw up your creed—write down your catechism"? So I answer to the English eloquence: "State first of all what you would have—draw up your novel system for the French Government—write down your political Constitution". Don't criticise but produce; do not find fault but propose—and when you have proposed upon theory and have created upon paper, let us see whether the system be such a one as will work, in fact, and be accepted by a wilful nation in reality—otherwise your work is nought.

And mind, too, that the system to be sketched out must be fit to protect the hearths and homes of men. It is easy to compose polities if you do but neglect this one essential condition. Four years ago, Europe was in a ferment with the newest ideas, the best theories, the most elaborate, the most artistic Constitutions. There was the labour, and toil, and trouble of a million intellects, as good, taken on the whole, perhaps, as the world is likely to see,—of old statesmen, and literary gentlemen, and youthful enthusiasts, all over Europe, from the Baltic Sea to the Mediterranean, from the frontiers of Russia to the Atlantic Ocean. Well, what have we gained? A Parliament in Sardinia! Surely this is a lesson against proposing politics which won't work, convening assemblies that can't legislate, constructing executives that aren't able to keep the peace, founding Constitutions inaugurated with tears and eloquence, soon abandoned with tears and shame; beginning a course of fair auguries and liberal hopes, but one from whose real dangers and actual sufferings a frightened and terrified people, in the end, flee for a temporary, or may be a permanent, refuge under a military and absolute ruler.

Mazzini sneers at the selfishness of shopkeepers—I am for the shopkeepers against him. There are people who think because they are Republican there shall be no more "cakes and

ale". Aye, verily, but there will though; or else stiffish ginger will be hot in the mouth. Legislative Assemblies, leading articles, essay eloquence—such are good—very good,—useful —very useful. Yet they can be done without. We can want them. Not so with all things. The selling of figs, the cobbling of shoes, the manufacturing of nails,—these are the essence of life. And let whoso frameth a Constitution of his country think on these things.

I conclude, as I ought, with my best thanks for the insertion of these letters; otherwise I was so full of the subject that I might have committed what Disraeli calls "the extreme act of human fatuity," I might have published a pamphlet: from this your kindness has preserved me, and I am proportionally grateful.

I am, yours,

AMICUS.

OXFORD.[1]

It is much to have an exposition of Oxford usages from Oxford men. The ancient Universities of England retain from their mediæval origin a trace of the *disciplina arcani*:—contumelious divines reject a discriminating reviewer,—"He is not a University man, what can he know?" We with difficulty recognise the subject now that we find on every turn a basis for our arguments and an authority for our facts.

Some believe that Academical Reform is a new idea,—that the existing system of Oxford is coeval with Oxford itself,—that it was found out by Nebuchadnezzar, and is effectually confirmed by the book of Job;—that even if there have been changes, those changes have come from within;—that the authority of the Crown is an innovation of the Whigs; and that to ask a Learned Body if it have money and if it keep its statutes is a "Liberal outrage" and "a judgment for the great Rebellion". But this is not so. A very little history, a very small number of facts, will prove conclusively that Reform in Oxford is very orthodox; that it flourished especially in the most palmy days of the most palmy Anglicanism; that it was formerly superintended by the straitest doctor of the straitest sect; that if Queen Victoria asks questions, King Charles "The Martyr" issued edicts; that a Commission to inquire—whether legal or illegal—finds at least a precedent in a previous Commission to *enjoin*.

"Many of the old statutes being grown out of use," says

[1] *Report of Her Majesty's Commissioners Appointed to Inquire into the State, Discipline and Studies of the University of Oxford, together with the Evidence, and an Appendix.* London, 1852.

the contemporary annalist under the year 1633, "by the change of Religion, and others also by long neglect and discontinuance, and some never rightly understood, and all so mingled and confounded, that it was very hard to say which of them were in force and which not, and yet all the Students bound to keep them under their corporal oaths, if not at their first matriculation then at their taking of degrees;—divers attempts were made to digest them into a new body, to the end that every one might know what was to be done and what was not." Many of these attempts were made when the Earl of Pembroke was Chancellor, but these never prospered, and the great work, as it is called in the documents of the time, lay unfinished till the accession of Laud to the Supreme authority in the University. That remarkable prelate—whom Carlyle has depreciatingly termed "a College Tutor of the first magnitude,"—took extreme interest in the matter, was concerned in some of the previous unsuccessful efforts, and appears from the evidence to have formed very sharp opinions on the most minute points of Scholastic regulation. He immediately on his accession to the Chancellorship began, accordingly, to agitate for what we should now term Academical Codification and Reformation, and with unparalleled good fortune soon obtained the very utmost that he could desire. At a Convocation held in August, 1635, the learned authorities of the University, by a remarkable delegation of their legislative functions, agreed to be subject to and to obey whatever laws the Archbishop, who was much praised, might in the plenitude of his wisdom think it expedient to draw up for them.[1] And this it seems by Laud's own account passed without a single dissentient voice. The Archbishop, who was never accused of indolence or want of regulative activity, did not let the matter sleep; he took for his basis the abortive labours of the previous reformers, and in a short time sent down an entire and digested Code, and directed his subordinate, the Vice-Chancellor, "to declare and

[1] "Placuit Academiæ," says Laud himself, "in frequenti Convocatione (ne uno refragante) rem totam ad me curamque meam referre ut sub incude meâ Statuta hæc limarentur et a me confirmationem acciperent."

publish to the University and every member thereof, that the Statutes now printed," meaning his own Code, "are and shall be the Statutes by which the University shall be governed for this year; *viz.*, till the Feast of St. Michael, which shall be in the year of our Lord, 1635," and for that year, which was intended to be a year of trial, he did not think it necessary to require any confirmation of his enactments from the University itself —nor from any authority superior to his own. During that year various objections of detail were made to the Code, which is emphatically a Code of detail, and various suggestions were made to the Archbishop for its amendment, some of which he complied with, but most of which it would rather seem he rejected.

What now remained, was to get this Code finally received and obeyed at Oxford. It seems to have struck the Archbishop that the resolution of Convocation, whereby he was empowered to draw up a "sanam epitomen" of statutes, and thereupon enact and confirm it by his own fiat and authority, was, to say the least of it, a resolution of extremely questionable efficacy: it is now clear, and could not even then have been much doubted, that a corporation—whether literate or illiterate—could scarcely delegate their power of making Bye-laws to a single subordinate legislator, and therefore Laud probably felt it requisite to have for his own Statutes some authority which should secure the respect and obedience of succeeding generations. The obvious course was to obtain a vote of the corporate body—to propose and pass the whole body of Statutes in the usual manner in the regular University Convocation. But this did not suit the Archbishop; a man of his temper—(for though he is now commonly thought at Oxford to be a martyr and a saint, he was ever deemed in his own age a man of imperious and overweening disposition)—could hardly brook that the results of his care and genius and industry should be discussed and criticised and perhaps rejected by a large and popular assembly. Moreover, there was a Puritan minority—a small one certainly —but very zealous, which would perhaps debate, certainly hint evil, and possibly destroy the *éclat*, unanimity, and glory of the proceeding by voting against the entire enactment. Accord-

ingly, the Archbishop, seeking a more certain and effectual confirmation, procured, by his influence with King Charles, the issue of a Royal Commission, composed of various then important persons, such as Dr. Bancroft, Bishop of London, Sir John Coke, the principal Secretary of State, and other gentlemen now forgotten, who were charged to bring down the new Code to Oxford, and to *require* its reception by the University under pain of the royal displeasure. With that view Laud sealed the "volume" with his own seal as Metropolitan, with the University seal then in his custody as Chancellor, and the great seal having been also duly affixed, the whole was delivered to the Commissioners. "These," says Wood, "coming to Oxford on the 21st of June, 1636, bringing his Majesty's letters with them, dated the 12th of the same month, a Convocation was celebrated the day following in St. Mary's chancel, wherein all the Heads of Houses, Regents and Non-regents being present, the said Commissioners were conducted thereto by one of the bedells from the *Sacellum Vestiarium*, commonly called Adam Brom's chapel, and being all seated near to the Vice-Chancellor, Sir John Coke delivered his Majesty's letters to the Vice-Chancellor, which he receiving with obeisance, delivered to the registrar to be read with an audible voice to Convocation. Therein it appeared that it was his Majesty's pleasure, 'that all the Heads of Houses under their hands should accept of the said Statutes, as the rule by which they should be governed and govern, and likewise to bind themselves upon oath to the observance of the said Statutes,' in the same manner as they formerly had done to the other loose and confused body." And then the seals were exhibited, and the enactment and confirmation by Laud as Chancellor and Metropolitan, and under the before-mentioned resolution, were announced, and also the enactment and confirmation by his Majesty *de jure coronæ*, after which Sir John Coke made "a grave speech in English," praising his Majesty and the Chancellor, and demonstrating from the nature of the prerogative the "full authorisation and absolute necessity" of submission to the laws so presented by him on behalf of the Crown; to which the Vice-Chancellor replied "in an accurate oration in Latin, and praised

the munificence of the prince, and the care and trouble of the Archbishop"; whereupon the Heads of Houses "received and embraced" the book, and swore to observe it; and with that recognition of royal authority the proceedings terminated, without any vote of Convocation or regular assent of the University to those laws (for they are still the *Corpus Juris* of Oxford), which are now said by the successors of those same Heads of Houses to be wholly removed from the just inquiry of the Crown, and to have sole reference to a subject-matter beyond the sphere of the legitimate Prerogative.

The language of the different actors on the two occasions runs in remarkable contrast. "I will not," says Lord John Russell in the present day, "enter upon the question of the legality of a Commission. Had it been intended to exercise power going beyond inquiry and report, such a question might enter into consideration. But the present Commission will be a Commission to receive evidence and report opinions, without power to determine any question, or to prescribe any course;" which gentle intention the Bishop of Exeter could not see without the "deepest concern and astonishment," and the Heads of Houses describe as "of the nature of an unconstitutional proceeding," impairing "the rights and liberties of her Majesty's subjects". So speaks the nineteenth century, even in Oxford, with a democratic voice; but hear the seventeenth.

"That," we quote Sir John Coke, "which commands in chief, and which no reason can withstand, is his Majesty's sovereign power, by which those Statutes (as you see) are both enacted and confirmed. Him we all acknowledge to be our Supreme Governour, both of Church and Commonwealth, over all causes and persons, and to his Supremacy and Allegiance we are all obliged by oath. This, then, we must build upon as an axiom and Fundamental Rule of Government, that all our Laws and Statutes are the King's laws, and that none can be enacted, changed, or abrogated without him;" and after a little, "But for Universities and Colleges, they are the rights of Kings, in a very peculiar manner; for all their Establishments, Endowments, Privileges, and Orders, by which they subsist and are maintained, are derived from Regal power; and

as it is your greatest honor, so it is your greatest safety, that now this body of your laws, as well as your privileges and immunities, are established, ratified, and confirmed by the King"; which oration the Rubric-bishop of that day calls "a weighty speech, befitting the occasion"; and which laws the Vice-Chancellor received as a "Pandect," and the Heads of Houses as "Leges æternæ"—the imperative Proclamation of an ordinance *for ever.*

Notwithstanding the enactment of several Novels, many of which are in point of legality very dubious, the Code which was thus enacted still remains, as it was intended to be, the Pandect of the University of Oxford. We see therefore that the law now in force, whether obsolete or not, is quite certainly anything but immemorial: that it is by no means *very* ancient: that it originated in times on no account entitled to a religious respect: that it began in a Reform—the last origin, we suppose, in which Sir Robert Inglis is likely to discern anything that is venerable.

Moreover the very circumstances which the annalist indicates as suggesting the enactment of the Laudian Code exist as much now as they did then: some of the laws—most of them we should say—are "grown out of use"; the more important parts of the system are fallen into neglect—much is in decay, more obsolete, much impossible—everybody is bound under his "corporal oath" to perform what he never attempts and to refrain from exactly that which he habitually performs. What is law is not done, and what is done is not law. It will be easy to show this at length in detail:—the only difficulty is one of selection; for the Report of the Commissioners provides us with materials that are as abundant as they are interesting.

It would not be fair to select any of the portions of the Laudian Code retained from older times, which were perhaps only intended to be formal, and which seem never to have been carried out even as mere formalities. It would be tedious to raise a laugh at an academical jargon. Thus to become a Bachelor of Arts, a man was to attend the "variations in the Parvis and respond under the determining Bachelor"—which were scholastic disputations derived from a mediæval period

when philosophical argument was a pecuniary pursuit, and it was a gain to be, in the simple sense of the words, a "sophist" and a "wrangler"—so, for the Master's degree, it is enacted that a candidate should solemnly determine in Lent, should be a respondent in the quodlibet disputations, the respondent or opponent in Augustines, and read six formal lectures, and afterwards to pass the vesperial disputations, an exercise of apparent length, at the end of which the Moderator is "to propound to each of the inceptors an antinomy or two, to be reconciled by them; and when these have been reconciled, he shall put an end to the disputations in a short speech," which amicable adjustment is with great judgment omitted in disputations of Theologians, whereat the Vice-Chancellor is "to apportion the period for argument to the several opponents, and cut short the thread of the arguments *at his discretion*."

But these enactments were even then falling into desuetude, and it is simply going the way of all the earth if the course of instruction and examination, which the Laudian Code plainly regards as practical, has shared the fate of that which it seems to admit to be obsolete. If there was any point to which Laud attached special importance, it was to the regularity and efficiency of the Professorial lectures. Both his "History" and his "Code" perpetually allude to it. "Because," says he,[1] "the man who should prefer to climb by the precipice to the pinnacle of elevation, though there are stairs by which to mount, seems to court a fall, it is ordained that scholars of the faculty of the Liberal arts, shall, before they aspire to the B.A.'s degree, thereon be bound to bestow four full years in the study of those arts within the University (not in any man's private house, but boarding and living without evasion in some College or Hall), and diligently to attend the public lectures as the Statutes require, that is to say, during the first year Grammar and Rhetoric, during the second those in Logic and Moral Philosophy, and during the third and fourth, those in Logic, Moral Philosophy, and the Greek language;" and in

[1] We quote here, as on all other occasions, the translation of the Laudian Code by Mr. Ward, one of the many useful works which Academical Reformers owe to the zeal and liberality of Mr. Heywood.

succeeding sections the Code strays into ridiculous *minutiæ* in elaborately enacting where and how the Students are to stand —when they are to be allowed to move—when they must suffer in silence—exactly when the Professor is to speak, exactly for how long, and exactly with what tone of voice, and exactly with what rapidity of utterance. But vain are laws against the indolence of mankind. In matter of fact, the Professors during a very long period have ceased to lecture at all. Gibbon observed in the last century, that they had relinquished the "pretence" of it, and the practice can scarcely be said to have been since his time revived. A very great and very notorious professor, like the late Dr. Arnold, may draw a very large audience, especially to Inaugural or Introductory lectures; a clever man may induce some of the more idle or literate of the elder residents to take advantage of his best instructions occasionally; but for any general influence on the Undergraduates, for any instruction which they give to the people to whom the Statutes refer, to the Students who go to Oxford to learn, the Professors might just as well be eloquent in Kamtschatka.

Again, the fate of the theoretical course of examination has been exactly that of the theoretical course of instruction. Laud gives the following account of the system by which he designed to supply the defects of the scholastic argumentations which were even in that age becoming impossible: "The examination is not to be in philosophical subjects merely, to which limits the narrow learning of the last age was confined, but also on matters of philology, and a principal object of inquiry with the examiners will be, what facility the several persons have of expressing their thoughts in Latin. For it is our will that no person should be admitted to the Bachelorship of Arts but those who can with consistency and readiness, and still less to the Master's degree but those who can with suitableness and aptitude, express their thoughts in Latin on matters of daily occurrence." This is not exactly the standard of linguistic information now necessary for a common degree.

But badly as the University has observed her Statutes, her very laxity seems scrupulous when compared with the scandalous evasions of her colleges. The Duke of Wellington, it may

be remembered, publicly defended the present usages of Oxford, by alleging, that though perhaps hardly in conformity with the wants and ideas of the present age, they were strictly and literally pursuant to the deliberate wills of ancient founders and the coincident directions of subsequent benefactors. An excellent example of this rigid observance may be found in the history of the college of All Souls—which is one of the most conspicuous in Oxford, and the one about which a stranger is, on the whole, the most likely to ask information. Now if he wishes to know how many people are taught in that splendid building, and on how many subjects, he will learn that no one is there instructed in anything. The college does not receive any Undergraduates,[1] and the revenues are devoted to the maintenance and support of various gentlemen of aristocratic birth, and by no means preceptive habits, who are called Fellows, and though mostly pursuing their agricultural avocations in remote parts of England, occasionally reside for a term or two in the University, but who have never had any idea of studying anything at those periods. We feel sure our readers must have a high respect for the intelligent founder of so beneficent an institution, so conspicuously elevating perhaps twenty gentlemen above the irksome occupations of defiled mortality:—they will learn with regret, that the founder had no idea of the kind at all. The Fellows according to *his* design were to be "poor and indigent," and none were to be chosen save those, "who having the first clerical tonsure, are qualified and disposed for the priesthood, are of free condition and born in lawful wedlock, and well adorned with good qualities and character, and are anxious to make progress in study, and *are really making such progress*". It is curious that this is one of the institutions which the Heads of Houses in their Report to the Duke of Wellington particularly set themselves to defend. They observe, "The several colleges in Oxford have been founded at various times from one to six centuries ago, in some few instances by Royal but chiefly by private munificence. They have exercised an important and salutary influence on the discipline and the education of the

[1] Four "Bible clerks" to perform menial offices are the only exception.

University. But it should be observed that they have not been usually founded, or in all cases endowed, for the education of youth, but for higher purposes." In the case of All Souls these higher purposes are remarkable. The college was founded in the 15th century by a certain Archbishop Chichele, who had taken a great share in instigating King Henry the Fifth to declare war against France, and who in his old age was not unnaturally repentant and sorrowful at the amount of the useless suffering that he had caused. According to the ideas of those times, a certain reparation was still in his power: the souls of some of those who were killed in the war that he had stirred up might still be in purgatory, and might (he imagined) be more speedily released from that terrible region if a continual intercession were made for them on earth. He therefore established a Chantry, the Fellows of which are by his Statute expressly directed to pray, "not so much to ply therein the various sciences and faculties, as with all devotion to pray for the souls of glorious memory of Henry the Fifth, lately King of England and France, his own illustrious progenitor, and the Lord Thomas Duke of Clarence, and the other lords and lieges of his realm of England, whom in his own and in his father's times the havoc of that warfare hath drenched with the Bowl of bitter death, and also for the souls of all the faithful departed;" and this Chantry, from the last clause, is called "All Souls," and this devotional service is the "higher purpose" which the Fellows of the college, according to the Heads of Houses, are bound to subserve.

An almost parallel instance is presented by Lincoln College, founded by a certain Richard Fleming, a renegade Wickliffite, who designed to root out and destroy "the pestiferous sect which attacks the sacraments, estates, and possessions of the Church," and wished in this, his foundation, to train up missionary theologians to preach continually against the new doctrines, and who directed that any Fellow tainted with these ideas should "be cast out, like a diseased sheep, from the Fold of his College"; and yet the whole college is now inhabited merely by "diseased sheep"; no one *not* tainted with the ideas which the college was to extirpate has the most con-

temptible chance of obtaining entrance within its walls: no one not adhering to the "pestiferous sect" has for 200 years derived benefit from its emoluments; the revenues of the renegade have been perverted to the uses of the creed which he relinquished; the man of most note, bred within the walls of his school, has been John Wesley; the votes of all that are educated there go quite unanimously to "the tainting of sheep," to the maintenance of Sir Robert Inglis, and the extirpation of Dr. Wiseman.

It is altogether idle to affirm that a Commission, which has brought to the public notice facts like these, was either unnecessary or uncalled for. The University magnates are in a dilemma: either it is their duty to observe their Statutes, and the inquiry was right, because they don't, or the Statutes must be modified to suit the public convenience, and the public have a right to see that, in fact, they do suit it. The resident authorities put it the other way: they argue, "We ought not to be inquired into, because we keep our Statutes, and we have adapted ourselves to the age because we don't". But this is nonsense; and clergymen should not want to have *at once* the advantage of performing their duty, and the gratification of neglecting it.

Nor must we be met by the dilatory plea that the present was not the time, because the University is reforming itself. It may be disputable how far even the intentions of the local Government are so meritorious as is alleged. But that may pass, for the labours of the Commission have elicited a fact which renders discussion of any other point quite irrelevant. It is very doubtful if the University *can* reform itself: perhaps the better opinion is that it cannot. It has always been regarded as pretty certain that the Colleges could not, by any act of theirs, dispense with the duties and obligations imposed by their Statutes; but it was only curious inquirers that knew how remarkable was the position of the University itself, and how disputable was its power to re-model itself from within. From the brief sketch which we gave a short while ago of the events attending the enactment of the Laudian Code, it will be clear how different were its circumstances from those

attending common academical legislation, or the customary enactment of a bye-law by an ordinary corporation. The idea at the time certainly was that its contents were imposed by Royal authority,—that the enacting energy (so to speak) was in the *fiat* of the Crown, and that a mere acceptance and declaration of obedience was all that could be required from the subject University, and the plausible idea has accordingly been suggested, that the Code, in fact, is rather a charter emanating from the Crown, and received by the Corporation, than a bye-law enacted by the Corporation itself of its own will and by its own power. So sound a lawyer as the present Chief Justice of England gave, when at the bar, a distinct opinion that such was the fact; and if so, there is no doubt whatever that the University would be quite unable, of its own authority, to alter an iota of what it had accepted from the "munificence" of Royalty; the election has been made: and if the University have subjected herself to a statutory yoke, she must petition the authority which imposed those Statutes, and desire to be relieved from their oppression. We only need to prove the existence of a doubt: the principle, it will be conceded, of a great national institution like Oxford, ought to be free from every shadow of question; people ought not to be left in doubt whether the greatest educational establishment in England is not conducted on an illegal system, is not guilty of a breach of trust, and is not governed by persons who take oaths to abstain from what they do, and constantly to do that which they constantly refrain from doing. Moreover, the language of the Statutes themselves is very much in favour of the doctrine of Lord Campbell, and the consequent inability of the University to deviate in the least from their provisions. Thus one section says expressly that no dispensation, whether total or partial, should be proposed concerning any Statute or Decree, framed, or to be framed at the command or suggestion of the Royal authority, unless a change or relaxation to some extent has been expressly enjoined by Royal authority. And another denies any "power of explanation" to Statutes similarly enacted; Laud himself considered them to be enacted for ever, and would most certainly have imagined that the

Puritanical "sin of rebellion" had strayed into the University of Legitimacy, if he could have been informed that there was even now a proposal to amend the ordinances that were to endure for the Platonic year—the *Leges Æternæ*—the *Leges Regia Auctoritate confirmatæ et sancitæ.*

The Commission, therefore, justifies itself; it has brought to light these facts; it has shown us that the present system must be defended,—not by eloquence or by poetry—not by an appeal to the wisdom of King Alfred, a rhapsody on the great Chichele, or a playful panegyric on Queen Philippa—not by a mystical scruple as to deviating from the directions of any one deceased, because what is now done does not accord with the directions of any one who is dead—not by a eulogium on recent reforms by the resident authorities, for it may well be that those reforms are illegal, and those authorities guilty of perjury—not by erudite pathos on the academical attainments of the martyred Laud, for the archbishop's Statutes are hourly broken, and he would hardly know his own University again; but by coarser pleas and less winning topics, —by the doctrine of desuetude, the evils of a Pharisaic conservatism, the doctrine of utility, the change of religion, the change of politics, the unalterable necessity of alteration, and the mere impossibility of standing still in an ever-shifting and transitory world.

What is said of the Commission having troubled the peace of the University, we own we take very lightly. Indeed, it does not seem that the place has ever been allowed to enjoy an over-tranquil or untroubled calm. "That," commences perhaps abruptly the learned annalist, "the University of Oxford flourished after the going away of Grimbald and the preferment of the other Professors, many there are, I persuade myself, that doubt it not, and *especially in the reign of King Alfred.*" As Oxford has been disquieted so long, she may be disquieted still. We doubt not that the University will continue to flourish after the advent of the Bishop of Norwich —the departure of Heads of Houses, perhaps as notorious as Grimbald—and the preferment of unscrutable Professors, equally profound with the most so of his contemporaries.

But if the Report of the Commission justifies the Commission, the evidence taken before the Commissioners in some sense justifies the University: Oxford is a fascinating city. Here are a very considerable number of gentlemen, all of them Reformers—some of them opposed in spirit to the characteristic theories of the University—none of them in the least representing the school with whom it is connected in the popular imagination—all of them abounding in attainments—many of them able—some with a large knowledge of the world—and they are all of them fond of the place. They all look back to their residence there with an evident and singular fondness. They all feel too, that the effect of the system on their minds has been strong; they are conscious that they are materially different from what they would have been if they had not been educated at all, or been educated elsewhere, and not any one hints that the training of Oxford has not been in his own case beneficial. Not one can suggest even an alteration without evident and heartfelt remonstrances. To alter Oxford is to alter their own youth. A place of education so winning and so effective may have many failings, but it must have great merits. We hope to show that, though we wish much change, we can at any rate in some degree, though, no doubt, incompletely, appreciate a few of the qualities that have gained the affections and obtained the gratitude of so many superior minds.

Very odd, indeed, at first sight, is the received English theory, that as places of education Oxford and Cambridge are both perfection. The schemes of tuition seem so different. Cambridge teaches her students the discoveries of Cambridge men; she occupies them with great P. and little q., with Airey's tracts, perplexing dynamics, the last reachings of the Newtonian deduction, the best results of the best teaching of Francis Bacon. Oxford, on the other hand, disdains every approach to novelty. Till the time when, thirty years ago, the much-reviled Dr. Hampden introduced an academical examination in the writings of Bishop Butler, not one of her most influential pursuits owed anything whatever to her own students: she taught exclusively from authors who were already very

old when she was herself young; according to the admission tacitly suggested by the course of her tuition—she had not herself, any more than the rest of the modern world, contributed any considerable element to human knowledge, that it was desirable to introduce into common education. Surely these diverse systems, one thinks at first sight, cannot both be right; if Cambridge is right in receiving the modern learning, then it should seem that Oxford is wrong in rejecting it; if Oxford rightly rejects it, then Cambridge is unwise in accepting and inculcating it. Is this true? We regret that we cannot answer the question save by a tedious disquisition, bare controversy, and mere principle.

Ποῖ καὶ πόθεν; what is a University for? unless we know with some accuracy that which we wish to have done, we can scarcely expect to discuss satisfactorily whether it is done for us or not. It is quite clear, even from the blue-book before us, that on this point there is no agreement. The theories there suggested are very various; and the only gratifying circumstance is, that throughout the whole medley no one gentleman is bold enough to avow an adherence to a thoroughgoing theory of negation. Even the Fellows of All Souls decline, we observe, to maintain explicitly that the object of a University is exactly to do nothing.

A very common notion is, that the Universities are places for *study*, and this not for the study of youth and semi-men, but of grown-up gentlemen and bearded scholars. And this was most certainly the general design of the Founders of colleges. These great institutions were founded for the benefit of what are called in this age, poor scholars. As we have seen in the case of All Souls, so in general, the object was to train a band or order of rigid, ascetic, semi-monastic students, who were to spend their lives in acquiring the learning of the age. Nor perhaps was this idea perfectly unsuitable to the purposes and wants of that period. In mediæval society Learning was more than at any other time divorced from the finer and subtler, and given over to the coarse and voluntary energies of the human mind. The learning of that age was analogous to the learning of positive law. It was necessary

to master a huge traditional theology, abounding in decisions, technicalities, and positive enactments, which no one could know without study; but which any man of energy and moderate ability could be quite certain of in some degree acquiring; and wherein a strong-natured man of poor parents—used to a hard life, with the dread of poverty behind him, and the hereditary energies of the working people within him—could not, and we see in history in general did not, fail to acquire great information. There was no poetry, no fine literature, no imaginative relaxation, in the scholarship of that time: the bulk of the mighty tomes in which it is enshrined warns the experienced eye that he must not seek *in them* the record of the rarer thoughts or more elevated moments of human nature—for these come seldom and are soon ended; but of the laborious vigour, the coarse understanding, the deductive reason, which can be used when we will, which proceed on definite assumptions, which therefore lead infallibly to definite conclusions. But this is not to be thought of for the colleges now. The canon law is gone by, the mediæval theology is food for the inferior animals. The finer classics—the lighter thoughts—the more delicate fancies—the most evanescent shades of meaning and of language, these are what we now call scholarship: and we cannot expect to train any great number of persons in any age to spend their lives on these. Keen excitements are at hand, and carry off into the great and busy world the very minds whose exquisite structure is the best adapted for literary discrimination. Those who really enjoy the best books take an interest in human life, concerning which those books are entirely written; and it is not likely that such will be content to hear in the cloister the second-hand stories of others, when the gates are open, the train passes by, and in an hour they can walk in Parliament Street themselves. A strange timidity, an instinctive pedantry, an inaptitude for common life—may force them back again within the narrow cell. But this is painful and rare.

In England of course this is especially true. We are not Germans, who care for what is not. Take up the *Life of Niebuhr* that was translated the other day, and it is surprising

to see the eagerness with which he withdraws from the living realities of life—not to the exquisite fancies or the profounder imaginations or the subtler observations of the higher orders, which might and do rest and invigorate and refresh the worn and troubled mind; but to the driest technicalities—to grammar and philology, to Basque refreshments and Polynesian recreations; and what is more strange still, he does not feel that his taste is queer or extraordinary. He seems conscious that in degree he feels it more powerfully than those who surround him. But the thing itself, the preference of what has been to what is, of what is abstract to what is fleshly, of what is in the grammar to what is in the ledger, the love of letters in general, and the contempt for £ s. d., seems to him the natural notion common to all that are awakened to real enjoyment—that are not of the earth, and earthy. In such a country as that it might be well to afford facilities for a race of students. We might hope that they would be active and cultivated, and ardent and happy. But here in a land of larger enjoyments, and better opportunities, and bolder energies, it would be entailing misery on many to bring up many to a life of research. The taste is rare, and a library of lofty volumes is the worst of prisons to such as think it a prison at all; it is "hard labour" without the stimulus: the bread-mill moves, but what is there "going on" in the Bodleian? Nor is Natural science or Mathematical science better adapted to the inclinations of any great number of common Englishmen; on the contrary, we respect, and perhaps justly, fine scholarship more than a familiarity with cubic equations, or the details of the dissecting-room. We must not try to fill many buildings with naturalists, nor did Providence mean many Londoners to be devotees to the "factorial integral". In attempting by large bounties (and such would be the resource of the Universities) to increase much the number of life-long students, we should but add to the supply of stupid and indifferent works, to the list of authors without a call. Why should we pay people to compose A Structural Dissertation on the Walls of Athens, Abstractitudes of the Sciences, Thoughts on Tissue, or A Biography of Greek Heroes anterior to Agamemnon? Some might write more

agreeably ; but these, if the partisans of the Students—a considerable number of estimable people—had but their way, these and such as these would be the labours of most inhabitants of Magdalene and Merton, which surely were not built for what is so superfluous.

A view exactly opposite to this has been advanced by an intelligent gentleman, who having recently become a legislator, seems entitled to very special attention. The member for Kidderminster, Mr. Lowe, regards Oxford as a "preparation for Australia". He tells us that he has seen in the colonies Oxford men placed in situations in which they had reason "bitterly to regret that their costly education, while making them intimately acquainted with remote events and distant nations, had left them in utter ignorance of the laws of Nature, and placed them under immense disadvantages in that struggle with her which they had to maintain". And we have no doubt that this is so ; nor do we deny that the present system of Oxford is open to the sarcasm which is intended. We are not going to argue that there are now at Oxford sufficient facilities for the acquisition of natural science : indeed we hold rather strongly that these facilities might and ought to be somewhat increased. But if Mr. Lowe has, as we collect, a notion or imagination that a University ought to fit men for colonial life—that it professes to do so—that if it neglects to do so, as it does, a sentence of inefficiency is immediately due, we dissent. We imagine that in a hard and earnest conflict with material and brute nature, a literary education can never give any superiority. Take the case of a goldfinder who spends his day bent double grubbing in the bed of a stream for imperceptible dust,—of what use is literature to him? Tacitus won't keep him from cold, nor is the Principia a preservative from damp. The thing there is the *knack* of finding gold. All that is requisite to be known of the laws of nature is rather obvious, nor will a profounder knowledge be really of extreme advantage. If all the people in Australia were taught a thousand sciences or a thousand languages, the yield of gold would be as it was before. And so of other pursuits. A certain small and rude knowledge of outward objects is all that

is commonly wanted by common practitioners, and that knowledge is apt to puzzle if there be any attempt to inculcate it systematically. Turnspits are in general ill-informed about the theory or laws of rotatory motion, nor do the cleverest people tell the time a moment quicker for understanding the works of their watches. The real education for every practical pursuit is specific—a digger wants the habit of digging—a shepherd, of keeping sheep—a mining agent should be bred in the mines. Christchurch will never prepare men for Labuan nor Oriel for the Rocky Mountains; and we suspect even from the case under consideration, that a superfluous conversancy with Sydney may much mislead a Reformer in Oxford.

A gentleman of great acuteness has adopted another theory. Mr. Clough is of opinion that the Universities are, ought to be, and must be, "mere finishing schools for the higher classes"—and apparently would reject with impartial equanimity the studious delusions of common Reformers, and the Australian advice of Mr. Lowe. Now it is quite certain that the Universities do perform the very important office hinted at rather than expressed by Mr. Clough. "If," says Sir James Stephen, "I had the pen of Edward Gibbon, I could draw from my own early experience a picture which would form no unmeet companion for that which he has bequeathed to us of his education at Oxford. The three or four years during which I lived on the banks of the Cam, were passed in a very pleasant, though not a very cheap hotel. But if they had been passed in the Clarendon in Bond Street, I do not think that the exchange would have deprived me of any aids for intellectual discipline or for acquiring literary or scientific knowledge." And notwithstanding many reforms and innovations, an increase of study and an inroad of private tutors, there can be no doubt at all that to very many of their youthful sojourners both Universities are much as they were. The real gain to perhaps a majority is anything but scholastic. The gentlemen of England are educated at many schools, they come to college for a year or two to learn one another's faces and names, to unlearn the overweening notions of public schools, and the "three-cornered opinions," as somebody calls them, of the

private academy. They derive from the society of one another —from wine-parties—from the common *et ceteras* of college life—a certain cultivation, certain friendships, certain manners, which are a step in advance on what in each kind they previously possessed, and give them besides an excellent start in English life. The gentry of England are thus, as it is said, "finished". They take the social type which is to last them for life. But surely this is hardly a sufficient reason for so great colleges? scarcely a sufficient account of such large structures and such enormous revenues? As Sir James says, the Clarendon would do. It is obvious that we must look elsewhere for the complete formulas of academical utility.

The Catholic Church has busied herself, as with other matters of late, so with this. Father Newman, who seems expected, or who is of himself inclined, to interfere in every matter beneath the sun, has recently and elaborately expounded a theory of Universities. We opened "The Dublin Lectures," as they are to be called, with expectation, but we closed them with disappointment. Father Newman is a man to fail. With all his ability, and invention, and logical accuracy, there is generally in all his writings some impossible postulate, some incredible axiom, that mars the whole. So it is here. He deduces his entire theory of a University from what we had always understood to be the obsolete derivation, that it is to teach "universal knowledge". This is odd enough. We are actually to receive from the emissaries of the Pope the very theory which twenty years ago was in vogue among certain rather advanced sectaries of the Radical philosophy. A man of some wealth and transactive ability sometimes has a family —he is struck with the importance of various subjects: he says, "There is Chemistry; what progress it makes day by day! What a scheme for making soap Dr. Dirtihands was mentioning yesterday!—my son must know Chemistry. And there is French; '*Commong survatteel?*'—my son shall know French. And there is Physiology; what an interesting topic the human frame is! We are always having diseases we can't account for. I wonder where I caught that cold last week—*my* son shall know Physiology. And then too what was that when I felt

so floored the other morning? I remember it was those barrister-fellows that were for me against the Brewer's Company, and they were talking of the late Lord Chancellor, and his always giving things to his relations—what's called Nepotism; and then a little red-headed man, who was very quick in business, said, 'Certainly, certainly, why he's *Nepos himself*'; and then everybody laughed at him, and I laughed. I wonder why we laughed? It is very unpleasant laughing when one don't know the reason. I fancy it is something in Latin—my son shall know Latin." And so on through all the range of the sciences; and the end is, that the young gentleman is sent to a "Seminary" near London, where everything is taught, according to the *Times*, "without corporal penalties," whereat he learns at least nothing. Something of this sort, we learn, is the Catholic idea of a College. Universal information is to be diffused; all sciences, "as the term University expresses," are to be taught; everybody is to be set to learn everything. But was it necessary to have so great an apparatus for so small a work? Is this what the Catholic Church is to do for us?—to build new lecture-rooms—to overteach a few pupils—to try, and fail, to induce mankind at large to search and seek for universal knowledge? Why did she come so far? We could do *that* for ourselves.

Nor must we repeat the yet more pernicious cant that education makes educated people cleverer than the uneducated. This idea is still believed in rural districts, where a good deal of conversational information is sometimes derived from reading, and where it is not known that literary men as much over-estimate the importance of literature as the currier in the legend the repulsive resources of the substance leather. But, authors and schoolmasters apart, the generality of mankind are pretty well agreed that in transactive ability, in common-sense, in industry, in energy, people who read little are at least as eminent as people who read much. "I never," said Sir Walter Scott, "knew a Dominie that was not weak." "Do not," says Mr. Gilbert in his book on banking, "choose a clerk because he has studied for one of the learned professions, for that is no advantage." No one goes to Cam-

bridge to inquire for a cutler. A first-class scholar would, in general, be a ninth-rate man-servant. If learning is an advantage for some things, it is a disadvantage for others. What does it then do?

In our notion the object of a University education is to train intellectual men for the pursuits of an intellectual life. For though education by training or reading will not make people quicker or cleverer or more inventive, yet it will make them soberer. A man who finds out for himself all that he knows is rarely remarkable for calmness; the excitement of the discovery, and a weak fondness for his own investigations, a parental inclination to believe in their excessive superiority, combine to make the self-taught and original man dogmatic, decisive, and detestable. He comes to you with a notion that Noah was discarded in the ark, and attracts attention to it, as if it were a stupendous novelty of his own. A book-bred man rarely does this; he knows that his notions are old notions, that his favourite theories are the rejected axioms of long-deceased people: he is too well aware how much may be said for every side of everything to be very often overweeningly positive on any point.

It is of immense importance that there should be among the more opulent and comfortable classes a large number of minds trained by early discipline to this habitual restraint and sobriety. The very ignorance of such people is better than the best knowledge of half mankind. An uneducated man has no notion of being without an opinion: he is distinctly aware whether Venus is inhabited, and knows as well as Mr. Cobden what is to be found in *all* the works of Thucydides; but his opinionated ignorance is rather kept in check, when people as strong-headed as himself, as rich, as respectable, and much better taught, are continually avowing that they don't at all know any of the points on which he is ready to decide. And when those who are careful *have* opinions, they are in general able to bear the temperate discussion of them. Education cannot ensure infallibility, but it most certainly ensures deliberation and patience. It forms the opinions of people that can form the opinions of others.

This, too, is a function which increases in difficulty with the increase of civilisation. As society goes on, life becomes more complicated, and its problems more difficult. New perplexities, new temptations, new difficulties, arise with new circumstances; every walk in life is clogged with tedious difficulties, and thronged with countless competitors, and overrun with infinite dangers. The moral problems, the political problems, the social problems, the religious problems, require a greater stress of understanding: we were in simple addition, we *are* in the Differential Calculus. Take the case of politics in this country now and as it was a century and a half ago. In Queen Anne's time the question was whether the Pretender should be king,—whether Popery should be the religion of the state, and that was nearly all;—on so large an issue very inferior and illiterate minds were quite competent to form a sound judgment. Sir Roger de Coverley, for example, who believed in witchcraft, and was not a college man, was quite able to reject the Pope and receive the Queen—"God bless her". But how the poor old gentleman would have been confounded in the present day! what would he have thought of Free-trade, Protectionism, and Caucasian Christianity? He would we fear have reflected in this wise on the General Election: "You see, though I can't quite tell (for I am getting old) what Lord Derby has done with all his old principles, I shall vote for young John Rising, who intends to support him, for you know his father Sir John was my very old friend, and knew more of fox-hunting than any one in Worcestershire, notwithstanding some were so foolish as to think me his equal; and though the Chancellor of the Exchequer is said in London to be a Jew, I could not deny but the poor in my county *was* more comfortable than ever." This was good influential reasoning in the first year of the eighteenth century, but it won't do now. We want men to get up facts, weigh principles, suggest illustrations, appreciate arguments; and this is the use of learning.

So too in religion,—how differently are we placed now-a-days in this Babel of sects, and the deluge of criticism, from the old times, when the choice was between two or three dis-

tinct creeds, depending on common and conceded postulates, and differing only in the respective correctness of a few not too complicated deductions! Now that the postulates are gone, who is there that can estimate the insuperable task of, as it is phrased, making a religion? And in the minor subjects of taste and refinement, with the growth of literature, the increase of luxury and the advent of æsthetics, who can too highly estimate the difficulty of reviewing works of art, and criticising styles, and comprehending the German speculations? And in the practical concerns of life, though a prolonged education rather interferes than otherwise with a perfect and instinctive mastery of a narrow department, though it disqualifies men for special or mechanical labour and the petty habits of a confined routine, yet for affairs on a considerable scale, for a general estimate of general probabilities, and for changing the hand and the mind from one species of pursuit to another, a carefully-formed mind and a large foundation of diversified knowledge are indisputably wonderful and all but indispensable aids. Men who blindly and instinctively follow out and feel after the minute details of a single occupation, generally know but that one, and can learn no other. In the increasing and multiplying wealth of the world, in the various and ever-varying ramifications of human industry, it becomes necessary that some people should comprehend the general plan, while others elaborate the special *minutiæ*, and it is lucky that the very wealth which by its superabundance, and the complexity of its nature, renders more than anything else all this enlargement of knowledge necessary, also by getting together in single hands, secures the easy conditions, the pecuniary resources, and the youthful leisure that are the necessary pre-requisites for its extensive diffusion.

So too by common consent certain of the professions have long been called learned and literate. Not thereby meaning so much that a great deal of literary information is commonly necessary in their everyday practice, as that the tone of mind commonly produced by a calm and deliberate education, by the habit of learning, by the acquisition of abstract knowledge, is especially favourable to the best exercise of the highest faculties

in their more abstruse and difficult departments. Particular portions of legal business are very properly conceived to be of this nature; the same may be true occasionally in the applications of medicine; and in many other newer and yet unclassified pursuits similar points often occur requiring the application of much knowledge, and the steady exercise of a disciplined mind.

Does Oxford accomplish this? Does it frame a type of character capable of forming the more abstruse opinions and of transacting the more severe portion of the intellectual business of the world? We can be at any rate at no loss for an answer. The materials are ample. In public life the Oxford men are conspicuous; they seem more perhaps than the pupils of any other seminary to have a very marked type running through them all, though of course modified and qualified in each by the difference of circumstances and of natural character. They appear to represent a principle, and that in itself is a stimulus to curiosity.

In some respects the character is old enough. In a few outward features, it is certainly rather like that of the mediæval student whom Chaucer sang of some four centuries ago:—

> "A Clerk there was of Oxenforde also
> That unto logike hadde long ygo.
> As lene was his horse as is a rake
> And he was not right fat, I undertake,
> But loked holwe and thereto soberly.
> Ful thredbare was his overest courtepy
> For he had goten him yet no benefice
> Ne was nought worldly to have an office:
> For him was lever han at his beddes hed
> A twenty bokes clothed in black or red
> Of Aristotle and his philosophie
> Than robes riche or fidel or sautrie—
> But all be that he was a philosophre
> Yet hadde he but litel gold in coffre;
> But all that he might of his friends hente
> On bokes and on lerning he it spent,
> And freely gave for the soules praie
> Of hem, that gave him wherwith to scolaie.

Of studie toke he most care and hede,
Not a word spake he more than was need,
And that was said in forme and reverence,
And short and quicke and full of high sentence—
Sonning in moral vertue was his speche
And gladly would he lerne and gladly teche."

"I regret to say," observes Dr. Arnold, "that the prevailing spirit of many Oxford men is the very opposite of liveliness."

"Sire Clerk of Oxenforde, our hoste said,
Ye ride as still and coy, as doth a maid
Were new spoused, sitting at the bord
This day ne herd I of your tongue a word,
I trow ye studie abouten som sophime,
But Solomon says that every thing hath time
For Goddes sake, as beth of better chere
It is no time for to studien here,
But precheth not as freres don in Lent
To make us for our old sins wepe,
Ne that thy tale make us not slepe."

A certain speechlessness is still a part of the character. "You will," says Hazlitt, "hear more good things in one day on the top of the coach, going or coming from Oxford, than in one year from all the residents in that learned seminary." A slightly excitable lady was once asked within our hearing what *she* thought of the literati of Oxford: she said: "They were so stupid I could strike them". But this is not quite conclusive. It is not good that every one should be loquacious or excitable or original: some must listen if it is meant that they should understand. Particularly the custom is to refrain from speaking on their own pursuits;—there is some story of a Head of a House who was presented to Napoleon after the peace of Amiens, and was asked on his return what was his opinion of the French Emperor. "Sir," replied the dignitary, "you see at once he is not a University man, he talks about the *classics*." Such was his opinion.

In moral and political opinions the Oxford man is quite as defined. Mr. Gladstone, to take the most marked and decisive example, is obviously and utterly different from what he would have been if educated anywhere else. He is the only con-

siderable political Englishman who has undergone what can even by courtesy be called a philosophical training. There is about him and in all his writings and in all his speeches a certain desire for principle, a wish to have an ultimatum, a reason, an axiom from which and to which the intellectual effort may start and be referred. His first principles are rarely ours; we may often think them obscure—sometimes incomplete—occasionally quite false; but we cannot deny that they are the result of distinct thought with disciplined faculties upon adequate *data*, of a careful and dispassionate consideration of all the objections which occurred, whether easy or insuperable, trifling or severe. How Dr. Arnold estimates this training—still conveyed from the same text-book as in Chaucer's time—may be read in a hundred passages of his letters and works. "We have been reading," says he, speaking of Aristotle, "some of the Rhetoric in the sixth form this half year, and its immense value struck me again so forcibly that I could not consent to send my son to a University where he would lose it altogether, and where his whole studies would be formal merely and not real, either mathematics or philology—with nothing answering to the Aristotle and Thucydides of Oxford." And again—"If one might wish for impossibilities I might then wish that my children might be well versed in physical science, but in due subordination to the fulness and freshness of their knowledge on all subjects. This, however, I believe cannot be; and physical science, if studied at all, seems too great to be studied ἐν παρέργῳ: wherefore rather than have it the principal thing in my son's mind, I would gladly have him think that the sun went round the earth and that the stars were so many spangles set in the firmament." And he acted on his theory. "You may believe," he remarks with respect to the London University, "that I have not forgotten the dear old Stagyrite in our examinations, and I hope that he will be construed and discussed in Somerset House as well as in the schools."

In other Oxford men this is as remarkable. You cannot open the writings of the most dissimilar among them without being struck by the thoughtful element which they have in

common. There is a perpetual and often quite unconscious employment of expressions and illustrations derived from the Greek, but especially from the Aristotelic philosophy—a certain accuracy in the expression of principles—and a certain keen deductiveness of understanding, which distinguish the works of men whom Nature markedly and of set purpose discriminated from each other; and this lasts their lifetime. Coleridge used to say, that if you took up a philosophical German writer, no matter whether second-rate or first-rate or fourth-rate, you would be struck with a certain carefulness of tone, a curious and guarded discrimination in the use of exact terms, a foreseeing of objections and so on, which would induce you to remark, "Really this writer is a philosopher"; whereas in fact it was only that the general style of philosophical thought was so diffused in Germany, that any man of fair ability, fair industry and fair power of imitation could easily acquire and affect it. Something of the same sort seems to exist in the very atmosphere of Oxford; for if you turn even from such great writers as Dr. Whewell, Sir John Herschel, or Mr. Mill, to the writing of even an inferior man trained on the characteristically Oxford system, you will feel at once, that although you may and will lose in vigour of originality, in variety of knowledge, in brilliancy of illustration, in liveliness of mind, yet you will gain in mere speculativeness. What theories there are will be expressed, as theories should be, with calmness, with accuracy, with dulness, with carefulness, with an anticipation of objections, after a conversancy with the ideas of what philosophers have preceded them.

On the theoretical side, therefore, we think that Oxford,—we won't say, succeeds; nothing succeeds in this world—but fairly and with much credit approximates to valuable success. On the practical, we fancy that it wholly fails. This seems admitted in the "Evidence". Mr. Denison, for example, who has favoured the Commissioners with some schemes for the improvement of legal education, is decidedly of opinion that *at present* the University man is under a disadvantage.

"The usual routine," he says, "of what is now called a legal education is as follows: a youth of twenty-two years of age, after completing

his studies at the University, comes to London to commence the study of the law. He is entered at one of the Inns of Court, is received as a pupil for a year by some eminent conveyancer, to whom he gives 100 guineas for the privilege of going daily to his chambers and seeing the business there transacted. That business is ordinarily the most technical, complicated, and difficult in the whole range of legal practice ; and requires great professional knowledge and considerable experience in particular departments of the practical concerns of life. It is therefore obvious that the special knowledge there to be acquired is purely practical ; and is confined to few subjects. The youth soons finds that, at the cost of 100 guineas, he has purchased the right of walking blindfold into a sort of legal jungle. Masses of papers are placed daily before him, every sheet of which contains numberless terms, as new and strange to him as the words of a foreign language, and the bare meaning of which he rarely arrives at before the clerk announces that the client has called to take the papers away. Fresh masses of papers replace those that have been thus untimely removed, and bring with them fresh grounds of vexation and despair ; and thus throughout the whole year of his pupilage the youth has to struggle with difficulties, which are an hundred-fold greater than they need have been, had he been fortunate enough to have learnt the alphabet of legal science before he undertook to grapple with the most subtle, abstruse, and difficult details of its practice. This unprofitable and disgusting year at length over, the youth is doomed to go through a second year of the like probation, at the same cost and almost as unprofitably, in the chamber of a special pleader or an equity draftsman ; and by the end of that year he is either so bewildered or so wearied with wandering through the seemingly endless mazes that obstruct the very approaches to his profession, that he either gives up the attempt as hopeless, and becomes a clergyman (an event of extremely common occurrence with Oxford men), or finding out that he is at last beginning to feel his way a little, hopes, by dogged perseverance, to attain, sooner or later, to a knowledge of that art which he sees very many persons of only average capacity practising with credit and success."

The system works simply. The educated pupil prepares a draft;—the uneducated practitioner looks it over. "I do not," he remarks, "*quite* see the necessity for those recitals. Did it strike you that they had any relation to the present purpose? I am afraid this operative part would give the court some trouble. Did you find any authority for giving an estate to A.B., his heirs, executors, administrators and assigns? Humph! Humph! Yes, yes, I see you've taken great pains with that original covenant. Yes, yes, we must put something in the place of that." What language to a solemn gentleman who has been during three years the idol

of tutors, maybe been a tutor himself, and especially from a man who never heard of Sphacteria and can't define "distributive Justice": no wonder if the victim thinks gently of a grammar school, or at the first opening absconds into a parsonage.

The fact is, that Oxford men want *εὐστοχία*,—they want intuitiveness. From a defect of liveliness, from an over-caution of understanding, they have not the *ταχύ τι*, the happy facility which takes hold at once and for ever of the right point or the right questions at the right moment. There is often not spring enough in the nature of such a man: he can go well in the high road of learning, but he won't do for the cross-country exercise of human life. It puts him out. He does not like that there should be virtues not in Aristotle's list, and it is impossible to convince him that there is anything which is not dreamed of in his philosophy. Give him time and he will generally come right, but in this hasty world who can *have* time? as the best speaker in a concourse of men is the man who has the best sayings there ready, so in action we must be able to act wisely at once, or else we must either do nothing or act unwisely.

In this respect the Cambridge men do better. A hard and mathematical Johnian is perhaps perfectly prepared for every abstract difficulty of active life. He may want taste and discrimination, and judgment in character, and skill in dealing with men, or art in persuading them; but in the bare application of mere principles, in the thorough mastery of appalling facts, in the technical manipulations—to speak absurdly—of any intellectual pursuit, according at least to our observation, he will never fail. Such men generally see a thing in the right light at first, and if they once get right, all the oratory which ever was or can be, all the eloquence of a private tutor, all the pathos of senior Fellow, will never induce them to swerve from their pragmatical honesty or to abate one jot of clear intellectual certainty in their dogmatic conviction. But they fail even in intellectual pursuits, when the finer faculties are required; they are good actuaries but bad metaphysicians; when they write books on thoughtful sub-

jects they make blunders without end. Mr. Mill, we believe, somewhere says of the last generation of eminent Cambridge men—that he never heard an *argument* from them which was worth anything, and though this be a trifle contemptuous, yet it is certain that of late the amount of general thought on general subjects for which we are indebted to Cambridge, is immensely less than what we owe to Oxford.

Is not this really good? We asked so long ago that no reader can be asked to remember it, whether there was not something very singular in the old English idea that the educational systems of both the two old Universities were both perfect. Like most odd and old ideas, it has much truth. Is it not perhaps better that we should have one University which practically devotes itself mainly to the culture of thought, and another which devotes itself principally to the training men for the more difficult species of intellectual action? These are the two duties of a University, as we showed just now. It is perhaps good that they should be kept in a certain measure separate. Each fulfils its own task rather better, if it aim at one mainly, than if it aspire to both equally. Besides, it is to be observed that each selects out of the general society exactly those who are thought to be best fitted to excel in the requirements and studies which constitute its test and its training. A mathematician—the son perhaps of a blacksmith—goes to St. John's; the son of a country vicar, with a taste for moral subjects and the classics, is most probably despatched to Oxford. Each is well trained; the first for the conveyancer's chambers; the second for a rural rectory.

In two points the two Universities coincide—selecting two elements which we believe to be quite necessary for the real education of an intellectual Englishman. They both teach a compact system of learning. If we were teaching a Frenchman who is versatile, or an old Athenian who was versatility itself, this might not be of so great importance, perhaps it would not even be possible, for we question whether those unstable and changeable organisations could be kept resolutely to a narrow pursuit. With the Englishman it is different.

His intelligence is slow and stubborn and sure; his memory, though retentive, is not facile; it is certain, therefore, that if you bother him with many things, he will learn none; if you do not allow him to become, as he thinks, *possessed* of some one acquisition, you will discontent him, and he will leave you. "It would be well," so says a thoughtful writer,[1] "to impress on the young men of the present day the value of ignorance, as well as of knowledge; to give them fortitude and courage enough to acknowledge that there are books which they have not read and sciences which they do not wish to learn, and to make them feel that one of the very greatest defects in a mind is want of unity of purpose, and that everything which betrays this betrays also want of resolution and energy." For if this be not learned easily and early, it will be learned painfully and late. One by one, day by day, the world will strip off the pretensions and false assumptions which we may put forth, no matter how great they be. What do you do for *me?* she asks; and she will require a solid answer. It has been a great happiness to many that two seats of national learning have consciously or unconsciously taken each a defined course and adopted a rigid system; the one by severe training in philosophers and historians, to teach men what *has* been thought, the other by a discipline in the technicalities of study, to prepare men for the like technicalities of abstruser action.

The other point of substantial unanimity between Oxford and Cambridge is the collegiate system. It is well observed by a gentleman who has given evidence, that this also is suitable to the national character. There is nothing for young men like being thrown into close neighbourhood with young men; it is the age of friendship; and every encouragement should be given—every opportunity enlarged for it. Take an uncollegiate Englishman, and you will generally find that he has *no friends*. He has not the habit. He has his family, his business, his acquaintances, and these occupy his time. He has not been thrown during the breathing-time of human life into close connection with those who are also beginning or thinking of beginning to enter on its labours. School-friend-

[1] Sewell on Plato, p. 125.

ships are childish; "after-life" rarely brings many; it is in youth alone that we can engrave deep and wise friendships on our close and stubborn texture. If there be romance in them, it is a romance which few would tear aside.

Of course also the college system, quite beside the labours of Tutors and Fellows, mainly aids in the work of education. All that "pastors and masters" can teach young people, is as nothing when compared with what young people can't help teaching one another. Man made the school: God the playground. He did not leave children dependent upon the dreams of parents or the pedantry of tutors. Before letters were invented, or books were, or governesses discovered, the neighbours' children, the out-door life, the fists and the wrestling sinews, the old games,—the oldest things in the world,—the bare hill and the clear river—these were education. And now, though Xenophon and sums be come, these are and remain. Horses and marbles, the knot of boys beside the schoolboy fire, the hard blows given and the harder ones received—these educate mankind. So too in youth, the real plastic energy is not in tutors or lectures or in books "got up," but in Wordsworth and Shelley; in the books that all read because all like—in what all talk of because all are interested—in the argumentative walk or disputatious lounge—in the impact of young thought upon young thought, of fresh thought on fresh thought—of hot thought on hot thought—in mirth and refutation—in ridicule and laughter—for these are the free play of the natural mind, and these cannot be got without a college.

We admit, however, that these excellences of our elder Universities have often passed into excess—have become defects. The compact system has become exclusive, and the colleges have gained a monopoly. For although it may be quite right and quite prudent, that every one should be taught a compact system, it does not quite follow that every one should be taught the same. Although the general scheme of Oxford education, based on the old philosophy, and the more weighty classics, may still, in our notion, be rightly preserved, there will be no harm in a good sprinkling of mathematicians, in an increase of undergraduates, learned in

modern philosophy, or even in a small deposit of naturalists. And though in a general way, everybody should be discouraged from learning everything, some versatile men will attain eminence in several studies, and these should have their reward. A choice between compact systems, as has been said, the good sense of our forefathers found out to be the fitting rule, and this choice which now only exists between the two systems of Oxford and Cambridge, should, without touching the rightful supremacy of the systems that are, be extended to an additional choice at Oxford and at Cambridge, between subsidiary and subordinate systems.

We shall be reminded, that this is there or thereabouts the very system which has been adopted in the recent statute passed in 1851; for by that statute three new schools were erected, in which, after evincing a certain acquaintance with the classics, a student may obtain a degree and a class by passing a sufficient examination in Mathematics and Mathematical Physics, in Natural Science—meaning the sciences of classification or observation, or in Law and Modern History. And though these three schools are not by any means exactly what we should like to see them, we very willingly acknowledge that if we believed that this statute would now really work in an efficient manner, we should applaud the Heads of Houses for having actually at last proposed something that is beneficial. But we believe that this piece of legislative extension will, in practice, turn out to be wholly nugatory. It is at best a mere expression of a desire on the part of the University as to what it wishes to have learned, and as to the subjects, proficiency in which it is willing to test by examination. Now, if the University were crowded with eager and disinterested students ready immediately to acquire and be examined in any branch of knowledge which the authorities of the place might indicate or mention, no reform would be more effectual. But more potent inducements are needed. People go to Oxford to get station and money—and they can only receive them from those who have them. The University is but a poor body, and has nothing of real consequence to bestow. The enormous wealth of which we hear so much, is in the gift of the colleges, and it

is from their endowments, and the places in their gift, that the successful class-man looks and must look for his pecuniary reward. A very distinguished observer has given his opinion on this point. "I think," says Professor Vaughan—

". . . that the fellowships should be opened practically to merit in all branches of learning which the University system now recognises. At present they are practically devoted to the literæ humaniores; the examination at most colleges is traditional, and the only merit recognised in the award of fellowships is classical knowledge and taste, and the power of dealing with moral and historical questions—departments of prime importance and great value, but no longer deserving exclusive ascendancy. When a mathematical tutor is wanted in the college, an exception is commonly made in the principle of election; but as a general rule, even mathematical attainments are disregarded in the choice of fellows, and the consequence has been that in spite of distinctions, classes, and scholarships, the study of mathematics still languishes. The number of candidates for honours does not increase; the reason is not doubtful—mathematics in Oxford are a bad investment for intellectual, physical, and pecuniary capital. The fellowships are the first substantial return for all the money and toil and self-denial involved in an intellectual education. The prospect of a fellowship closes the vista, it leads the eye, and *directs* the energies as well as animates them. On this account, notwithstanding all the honorary and titular encouragements given to mathematics, they are practically discouraged. This consideration is *one of vast importance in its bearing on the recent extension of University studies.* If it be seriously desired and intended to give vitality to new studies, we must operate upon the fellowships for this purpose. If the course of things is left to itself, the traditional system of election will probably prevail in the colleges. The examinations will embrace the old topics; the new either will not be admitted, or, if introduced, will but lightly or occasionally affect the election. Thus under a system nominally comprehensive we may find our actual course as narrow as ever in its range, and perhaps even less energetic than before. For if the fellowships be opened to merit, and this merit consist in the classical proficiency of persons destined to holy orders alone, the standard of excellence will fall, even in classical subjects, lower than at present. Let us suppose thirty fellowships vacant every year in the University: under this system every second-class man in classics might be sanguine of obtaining one. In lieu of the few fellowships now open to competition and stimulating to great exertions, the numbers will be largely multiplied, and the pressure of motive to exertion be proportionately lowered. I do not mean to state that an encouragement to mediocrity has not its advantages: it is better to be in the middle than at the bottom, to be indifferently good than bad. But I think that those who seriously consult the improvements of our institutions cannot be content with such: I would propose, therefore, *that a certain number*

of fellowships in each college should be specifically devoted to certain branches of learning. This arrangement, I believe, and this alone, will secure the cultivation of all valuable knowledge—classical, historical, theological, philosophical, mathematical, and physical."

Nor can it be said that the endowments of the colleges are insufficient for the purpose—since a very accurate authority has described them as follows:—

"There are in Oxford 542 fellowships. This does not include the demyships at Magdalen, but it does include all the fellowships at St. John's and New College, and all the studentships at Christ's Church, which differ from fellowships elsewhere in being tenable, and to some extent actually held, by undergraduates.

"From this body of men has to be supplied all the studying and all the educating power of the University—all the professors, all the tutors, all those who pursue learning for its own sake and beyond the needs of practical life.

"Out of this number only 22 are in such a sense open, that a young man, on first coming up, sees his way clear towards them, with no other bar than may arise from his own want of talents or diligence."

It is evident, therefore, how nugatory the late statute will be; also where we are to look for reform.

In another point too the colleges require innovation. They have a monopoly, and, like all Protected classes, they have a little slumbered on their work. Every student by the Laudian Code must be a member of some Hall or College. No college can admit more than the number, whether large or small, that its own buildings can accommodate, and by very natural, if not very commendable, arrangements, every student is a good deal confined to his own college for education and instruction.

The Commissioners substantially propose that all these restrictions should be broken down; they would allow persons to keep terms at the University, without being members of any collegiate establishment, which was also most certainly the ancient system, as the present restriction dates only from the time of Queen Elizabeth and the Chancellorship of the erudite Lord Leicester, and they would also allow every college to admit students to its other advantages, without necessarily requiring their residence within the walls. The benefit of the latter plan, which is that pursued at Cambridge, is that the

best colleges gain thereby the power of unlimited competition, and the inferior, if they would not see themselves altogether destitute of undergraduate residents, must, in some measure, emulate the well-doing of their superiors, and cannot rely on a certain annual dividend of students, who, better places being full, must go to them, or forego the University entirely. In both respects, it seems to us that the Commissioners are practically right. We should, as our readers will have gathered, regret to see any general abandonment of the collegiate system; for we regard it as the sole mainspring of the best education. But exactly because we believe it to be the best, we are willing to let others be tried. We have no fear that the extra-collegiate residence or instruction can ever be more than a healthy and gentle stimulus from without. It may quicken the lazy consciences of certain Fellows, but it cannot change the habits of our people.

The Commissioners also propose the revival of the Professorial element—which would indeed be necessarily needed if any considerable number of "unattached" students were to congregate at Oxford, but not to enter at any college; for the Professors, as we need not remind our readers, are the teachers provided by the University, and are the persons to whom the Laudian Code almost exclusively looks for Academical instruction. The great reason for doing this is not exactly connected with the detail of education; since it is very dubious if under any management the University lectures could be made of more than a subordinate or subsidiary usefulness. In practice and upon trial they have yielded to the inroads of the more modern instructions of the College Tutor and the Private Tutor, and though with the growth of the new Studies a fair place may perhaps be found for them, still they are not and cannot be necessary or essential or primary. The argument for their revival is different. It is odd how few men of European reputation Oxford has turned out. It used to be argued; "What University, I pray, can produce an invincible Hales, an admirable Bacon, an excellent well-grounded Middleton, a subtile Scotus, an approved Burley, a resolute Baconthorpe, a singular Ockham, a solid and industrious Holcot, and a pro-

found Bradwardine? all which persons," continues the wondering author,[1] "flourished within one century." But now the mediæval luminaries are waxed dim, and admirers of Oxford are compelled to allow—

"The great want of Oxford hitherto has not been merely nor chiefly that the Professors have not been sufficiently active in teaching, but that the system has disfavoured the existence and missed the general effects of Professorial learning. Some powerful men we have had; a considerable body, or a constant succession of such, we have not had; men who could give authoritative opinions on matters connected with the sciences; whose words when spoken in public or private could kindle an enthusiasm on important branches of learning, or could chill the zeal for petty or factitious erudition; men whose names and presence in the University could command respect for the place, whether attracting students of all kinds and ages to it, or directing upon it the sight and interest and thought of the whole learned world; men whose investigations could perpetually be adding to knowledge, not as mere conduits to convey it, but as fountains to augment its scantiness, and freshen its sleeping waters. Of such men we desire more than we have had. The first care must be to encourage the existence and promote the creation of such."

There is no saying, in matters of this sort, so false as the dictum of Mr. Carlyle, "the true University of this day is a collection of books";—it is so if you wish to form a bookworm, but not else. Who doubts that the presence of a man like Arnold in any place is a dynamical power of the first intensity? Who does not see in the once omnipotent influence of Father Newman, a plain indication that if the Professoriate is silent, the pulpit of St. Mary's is ready to misuse its functions?

The greatest change in theory and principle of all, is one that is not technically before us—we mean the admission of the Dissenters. On this the Commissioners were not asked to report, nor is it one on which their inquiring or our writing is likely to be of extreme avail. In fact, the *onus probandi* is on the other side; here are, we will say, perhaps a hundred English youths, as clever, as able, as intellectual, as likely to participate in the full benefits of University instructions, as any other youths. Why then should they be excluded?

[1] Anthony à Wood.

It is commonly said, that "the auspices are not favourable". The "Founders' wills," which are analogous to "the chickens" under the Roman Republic, it seems are adverse, at least so the dignified magistrates who alone can duly interpret such occult mysteries explicitly declare, but from which however we must only infer that those magistrates dislike what is proposed, for it has long been observed that in the explanation of testaments and auguries, nothing is ever forbidden which is agreeable to the prejudices and purposes of the presiding authority. But with implicit deference to the Heads of Houses, who alone of course can form a court of competent jurisdiction in matters so ominous, it seems anomalous on this ground to exclude Roman Catholics, who are of the religion of the Founder. It appears odd and wonderful that every benefactor —though, as the divining authorities state, laudably anxious for the exclusive benefit of his own kin,—should have always neglected to provide any preference for his own religion. It is more singular again, that he should have always expressed a strong preference for the religion of others. No doubt it is so, if the augurs say so; but it is not quite what we should expect.

Why do we draw the line at the Thirty-nine Articles? Why should young Gorham and Philpotts, junior, learn side by side, if children of one religion only can safely be taught together? *Their* parents don't agree at all—on the contrary, each suggests that the other will sometime be in a difficulty. Surely, with the recent history of Oxford before our eyes, it is idle to fear an access of theological disputation. Of the year 1182, it was remarked, "Politeness being now vanished, and declamatory orations and such like exercises being laid aside, those students of the University who had no intentions to busy themselves, or make benefit by the laws, applied themselves to controversial divinity, and spent their chiefest time in unfolding the thorny questions thereof—so that neglecting also the vein of purity both in writing and speaking, their Latin became generally barbarous, and they themselves so conceited, as to esteem all things most eloquent that they spoke. Baleus seemeth to be a great enemy to this divinity and the Professors

thereof, for after his wonted way of exclaiming against all things done in these times, which he took to be altogether superstitious, he gives us an uncouth and harsh opinion of it, thus: 'Et stultior est hæc sententiarum Theologiæ ex hoc centaurorum biformi confleto genere, quam sunt scripta fabulosa Hesiodi et Orphei Theologorum Gentilium'. In another place he calleth it, 'Theologiam ineptiorem quam erat antiqua illa Gentilium Sapientia poetica et fabulosa':" really Baleus was a great man. We suggest that an admission of the Dissenters may improve the quality of the discussion.

In truth, there is no reason. The University of Oxford is a part of the nation; it has changed, is changing, and will change, with the nation. Notwithstanding that a verbal assent is exacted to the Thirty-nine Articles, what proportion of Oxford-bred men can give any rational account of them, or of the weary controversies out of which their very nomenclature arose. On a hundred points therein contained, the English nation has no opinion at all; since our fathers fell asleep there has been no *bonâ fide* discussion of them; we have grown to manhood, and must pick up our belief as we can. The English nation is divided; English Dissent is a congeries of sects; the English Church is a congeries of sects: a really national institution should attempt and endeavour to embrace, if so it might be, reconcile them all. Certainly, the present system encourages jesuitry and equivocation. "Science," say the Tractarian divines, "tells us that the earth goes round the sun; Scripture that the sun goes round the earth: for our part, we believe both; both may be." Excellent if you can—admirable if it be only possible; but is the State to be asked to give a monopoly to the teachers of *such* a theology?

We do not suppose, however, that the admission of the Dissenters would be practically any amazing change. Not an enormous number would go. It must be recollected that the theological division of the English people corresponds, though very roughly, with a social division. Nonconformists differ much from Conformists; their habits are different; their manners are different; their ethics are different. A Unitarian marries a wife, and turns banker; his son is made a lord, and

turns to the Church ; *sic itur ad astra*. So subtle and so strong are the influences of life and society, of rank and homage and luxury—so feeble the strength of loose opinion, that few families resist the former long ; hereditary wealth, in a generation or two, very conscientiously retreats to the religion of the wealthy. All this was quite forgotten at the establishment of the London University. Lord Brougham is accustomed to describe the expectations of thronged halls, and eager students, and intense and ceaseless study ; and the astonishment of the promoters at the moderate number, and calm demeanour and brief sojourn of those who responded to their call. Nor is the case altered now. The expanse of Gower Street will not emulate the slopes of St. Geneviêve, nor will De Morgan be followed like Abelard. The number of Nonconformists who desire to give their sons what can, in the English use of the term, be called a University education, is not very considerable, nor, according to the better authorities, does it increase. They do not design their sons in general for an intellectual life, for the learned professions, for business on a large scale or of a varied kind ; they do not wish their sons to form aristocratic connections ; but to be solicitors, attorneys, merchants, in a patient and useful way. For this they think—and most likely they think rightly—that twenty years of life are quite an adequate preparation ; they believe that more would in most cases interfere with the practised sagacity, the moderate habits, the simple wants, the routine inclinations, which are essential to the humbler sorts of practical occupation. Open therefore the older Universities though you may, you will not practically increase or materially change the class who will resort to them ; the Dissenters in Oxford will ever be but a small, a feeble, an immaterial, though certainly a respectable and perhaps an erudite minority. The English Catholics might be a more numerous, as we suspect they are in Oxford opinion a far more formidable, faction : a Catholic Hall, we can believe, would really be a nuisance in Oxford ; yet even this, we imagine, should be boldly encountered. It would become much less fearful in a very few years. The English leanings and prejudices are so contrary to Romanism, that it is only the semblance of perse-

cution and the fortuitous opportunities of recent years which have occasioned its recent prominence. Would not the Tractarian movement have come to a point sooner, have gained less strength, have effected less for the Roman Church, if the Oxford men had from early youth seen exactly what Catholicism was. Familiarity will spoil romance,—the charm of Romanism is its mystery. But anyhow, if what has been said be in the least true, if Oxford is, as we have hinted, to educate our thinkers—how absurd to train them in ignorance of what is—how peculiarly foolish to deny them the instruction of associating with people formed in other disciplines, and bred in other faiths, the only sure mode of comprehending those disciplines and estimating those faiths. How wretched to make them say exactly beforehand what they will believe—and that with an accuracy which hardly any cultivated man would like to apply even to his most elaborate or mature speculations. What wonder if this ends in the common doctrine that the articles are "forms of thought"—irremediable categories of the understanding—certain by nature,—as clear as if they were themselves revealed.

Of what would follow upon the admission of Dissenters—of the Halls or Colleges that should be established—of the rules proper for them—of the mode in which theology should be taught when there are known and tolerated differences of opinion to be taken account of—of these and other points it would be premature to speak now. What is wanted for the moment, is to take off the subscriptions to articles both at entrance and at the degree. This, without any other change, would secure the great step, the admission of the non-Anglican classes: we have proved that this is wanted for Oxford itself, and what we have said of a modern University shows, we imagine, that the Dissenters are not numerous enough to form a University by themselves—that London is not, as Lord Derby has oddly argued, an equivalent for Oxford.

What is our chance of getting these Reforms? From within, exactly none. The government of the University of Oxford is one of the worst features of its present condition. A little principle will make this clear. The best and most

natural administrative and presiding government of a corporate body professing to promote the pursuits of education is, we suppose, an aristocracy of the persons educated there—a select body, in a great degree, at least, composed of those who have had a practical experience of the benefits and evils of that institution itself, and who have shown during the period of their education—or otherwise in after-life—that they were competent to appreciate the one and counteract the other. In a college, we conjecture, of necessity, the power (division of pecuniary dividends perhaps excepted) must be mainly in the hands of persons engaged in education at the time, or recently before, within its walls. Few others will know the requisite detail, nor do the affairs of such an institution in general possess very great interest for any others. With a University it is otherwise. Teachers, in general, do not settle too well *what* is to be taught: the manner of teaching under a little healthy competition they will be pretty sure soon to know; but why it is good to know anything—what are the advantages of each subject—which is best for what persons—on such questions they are little likely to be better informed than others, and on them their conversation has commonly, in our experience, a rather opaque texture, and a somewhat torpid effect. And if the University be prosperous and useful, it is likely that a considerable number will be found among its more distinguished students interested in its good fortune, and able and willing to take a share in its government and direction. Such a body exactly is, according to the theory of it, the Hebdomadal Board, or weekly meeting of the Heads of Houses—that is, of Halls and Colleges in Oxford. It might seem likely that the Head of a College would be one of the best men in the University, one of the persons most distinguished, locally, and in the world. The duties of the office are light, they do not entail daily residence, and the emoluments are very considerable. They fill a fair station in the eyes of mankind, and have every opportunity to acquire much acquaintance with the external world. It might seem that this was just such a body as we have imagined and described. The whole is spoiled by a vicious system of choice. The Heads of Colleges are elected by the Fellows; and the Fellowships—we have seen—are, as

it is termed, close—that is, not open to general competition, or given to merit. We have quoted already, from Mr. Temple's evidence, the rather startling assertion—which the Commissioners quote as accurate—that out of 542 Fellowships not more than 22 are really accessible to all the best men that may be at Oxford, whenever they chance to be vacant;—the rest are given to the Founders' relations—to people bred at the school where he was born—to people that were born within two miles and a half of the place where he is buried—not more than six precisely from that at which he beneficially died. And the remainder, as well as these in default of claimants, are given by favour. The candidate is some relation to somebody else—is gentlemanly—is praised by persons unknown—has connections with patronage in the Church—and he is elected. Sometimes there is an examination previous to election, but there is always a mischievous doctrine that the knowledge there shown is not to be the sole test for that purpose of merit; but that the Examiners may allow for what they otherwise know to a man's advantage—which is interpreted by a legend of a distinguished dignitary's observing to a friend of his that was a candidate—"I ain't going to read the papers—I shall vote for *you*, old fellow". And as the Fellows are elected, so in general do they elect. "They," says Mr. Senior, speaking of the Heads of Houses—

". . . are generally taken from those who are or have been fellows of the college. When taken from those who have been fellows, the incumbent of a valuable college living is frequently chosen, as two persons unite their influence for that purpose, the incumbent and the person who according to the habits of the college is entitled to succeed him. When an actual fellow is chosen, it is frequently a man who has passed an idle Oxford life, and become familiar therefore with all the fellows, or has been an active useful bursar, and is supposed likely therefore to manage well the college revenues, or is recommended by sympathising in the doctrinal or political opinions of the majority, or simply by an easy temper. I am inclined to think that the peculiar qualities which fit a man to preside over a place of education have seldom much influence; the selection is made from a very narrow circle, and even in that very circle the best, or even the second best, man is seldom chosen."

Mr. Senior would vest the appointment of the Heads of

Houses in the Crown. Professor Vaughan, whose evidence has been before quoted, propounds a different scheme. "The Heads of Houses," he observes—

". . . do not necessarily, or even very generally, follow literary and scientific pursuits. Nor are they directly and closely connected with the instruction of the place. They simply appoint the tutors, and preside with more or less activity at the terminal examinations in College. They live generally with their families, and do not immediately imbibe the spirit or learn the wishes of those who more directly carry forward the instruction. They constitute a most valuable element for legislation as well as administration; but I think that it would be advantageous, if in addition to this, other influences were admitted to give their aid in suggesting and framing the laws of the University. It would be well, I think, at least to *comprehend* a learned element, such as in many European Universities has the chief if not the only sway. It would be desirable that in the seat of learning and instruction, those who have attained the highest position as cultivators of literature and science, who must be considered as intimately acquainted with the state of the several departments of knowledge, who are brought into occasional contact with students of all ages and degrees in the place, who have proved themselves to possess a considerable degree of intellectual power, and who are necessarily interested in the success and reputation of the University, should take some active part in making and administering the laws. I allude of course to the Professors as a body, who at present are scarcely recognised to be a part of the University system. That a University, in the higher sense of the term, should exist without such a class seems almost impossible; and it would be wasteful to possess it, or call it into existence, without assigning to it an important place in legislation and management. I do not suppose that there could occur any signal difficulty in the attempt to form a legislative and administrative Board out of the body of Heads of Houses and Professors. But I venture to suggest a scheme which would fulfil the conditions I have pointed out, and at the same time it would comprehend a third element tending to give the legislative Board somewhat of a popular and representative character, and thereby aiding its efficiency. For in order to convey information as to the state of the students, their moral condition, discipline, and attainments—in order to bring the public opinion of the place to bear more completely on the legislation—and to harmonise the legislation with the actual working of the system—it might be well to include in the legislative body a certain number of representatives of the present Masters."

The Commissioners think the present scheme would work well, in time, if only the fellowships were thrown open. Anyhow, and one way or other, we hope to see the presiding board composed of the best men that Oxford can train.

Even when that is obtained something will be left. It is not to be expected that a large and highly educated body of persons, like the graduates of Oxford, will remain contented without some real share in the government and direction of a University—to which, in general, they are very strongly attached —nor is it to be wished. A small board of a dozen people, however well formed, even if composed of the twelve wisest men now living on earth, would be liable to considerable errors. It will be exposed to pique, and prejudice, and mistake. It will now and then be indolent. It will be exposed to domination from a restless and resident man. Being a bureaucracy, it will have the defects of a bureaucracy. It will always require criticism, and will often work the better for occasional censure.

At present there is in theory ample scope for popular action. The Convocation of Master of Arts at Oxford is in theory supreme; not a single bye-law, not a single change in the curriculum, not a single honorary degree, can be enacted, effected, or conferred without its authority. It has ample powers of debate; no Charter from the Crown can be accepted or surrendered without its assent. Savigny notices the popular Constitution of the Universities of England as one of their peculiarities, and it might really seem as if he spoke truly. But in fact, if we except an unlimited power of mere rejection, the Oxford Convocation has no power at all. Its right of debate and discussion are reduced to narrow limits, by the rule that all members must speak in Latin; their power of legislation is abolished by an exclusive right of initiating measures that has for a very long time been vested in the Heads of Houses. The effect is, that the Convocation has merely the right of rejecting or accepting without amendments, or alterations, or modifications, the whole of what is proposed to them by the Hebdomadal Board. It appears to us that these restrictions are on principle erroneous, and that it is advisable that they should be immediately and entirely removed.

We have not here the good fortune to find our opinion confirmed by the authority of the Commissioners. The fact is, that the Convocation at Oxford is an eminently Conservative body; perhaps more so than any other body now in the

realm; its members are exceedingly out of the way of new ideas; they never understood Latin by the ear, and it is forbidden to address them in any other language; they don't know what is wanted and they can't be told it: they are interred in parsonages, and dream over their youth; what wonder if they wish the University to be as it was in their time; and if they are altogether opposed to changes, the bent and bearing of which they cannot comprehend. They see that Modern History is of no use among the poor, and very commendably object to its being taught. It is clearly preposterous to give a miscellaneous and casual body of this sort, the final decision on the details of a *curriculum*. Its members are certainly not competent to exercise varied, or questionable, or complicated powers, but what powers they have they should really and truly exercise. The right of debate and petition (petition we mean addressed to the Hebdomadal Board) on matters connected with Universities, could scarcely in an assembly of English gentlemen lead to any very atrocious results. Several gentlemen argue in the evidence, and it is evident their representations carry great weight with the Commissioners, that there is an extreme danger in erecting "a vast debating society in which, as occasion offered, every question might from time to time be discussed". And certainly if it were proposed or designed to establish a society in Oxford for discussing theological or political questions in general, the objection might well be called unanswerable;—continual discussion on miscellaneous but exciting subjects would obviously interfere with the calm torpidity which does and should characterise the place. But if the discussion were by the law and constitution of the University rigidly and exclusively confined to matters affecting the welfare and interests of the University itself, the evil could not be of immense magnitude. Suppose there were—as very likely there would be just now—a striking debate once in two years, and almost mere silence between, surely that would hardly annihilate Oxford. Big buildings and broad acres can outlive much eloquence.

In place of abolishing the restrictions on the freedom of the

old Convocation—which they propose to leave pretty much as they found it—the Commissioners propose to revive an old body called the House of Congregation, to be practically composed of the working tutors and teachers of Oxford, who are on this scheme to exercise the controlling, suggesting, and criticising function with respect to the higher authorities which it is generally felt some popular body ought to exercise. This is in fact a scheme to get a Convocation without what are sometimes called the "country masters". We will not say that we dissent from a recommendation which we do not feel very able duly to appreciate, but we doubt. We have a great suspicion of complicity in Constitution-making; two bodies, we should have imagined, were ample for duties so simple and problems so little perplexing as those which are likely to come before the consideration of academical authorities. The British constitution does very well for Great Britain and Ireland, and all the colonies, but it would be ridiculous for three acres of land. We would rather see a popular Convocation with limited but efficient powers controlling and criticising and beseeching a select and admirable Hebdomadal Board.

From without, our chance of a reform in Oxford is much greater. The Heads of Houses do not know where they stand. Oxford is unpopular. Innovation may not come this year or next, but give destiny time, and it will be. It is useless to count up the number of her scholars—to demonstrate that, since the middle ages, her teachers have never been so many, or so diligent, or so useful. Mere labour will not save her. Year by year, hour by hour, as it were by a magical or secret influence, authority and dominion are leaving the classes that reverence her, and pass to those who know her not. What do the people in Wigan care for the Dons in Oxford? The authority which the cultivated and hereditary gentry of England have exercised for ages, is now to be transferred to classes not more instructed, not more wise, not more learned, not more refined—inferior in gentleness, in grace, in judgment, but superior in overbearing labour, in coarse energy, in the faculty of work. It will be well, if the wisest designs, the best opinions, the most beneficent institutions, the most time-honoured and

efficient establishments, prevail against that ardent ignorance, that unknowing energy, that sharp and overweening decision. It will be much if pure argument, if deliberate eloquence, if wise reasoning, avail with men whose notions are so narrow, whose fancy is so weak, whose indolence is so finite. To them we doubt if Reason will justify her children—we are certain she will do no more. If we are to defend the nonsense of antiquity as well as its sense, we shall speedily cease to defend either. Will Financial Reformers neglect the sinecures of All Souls? Will scoffers at the House of Lords crouch before the Hebdomadal Board? Will believers in Mesmerism be tender to Magdalene or Merton?

Lastly, Oxford has vexed the English people—she has crossed their one speculative Affection; she has encountered their one speculative Hatred. So often as a Tractarian clergyman enters a village, and immediately there is a question of candlesticks and crosses and rood-lofts and piscinæ—immediately people mutter, "why that is Oxford". More than that. A hundred educated men (as Romanists boast) with her honours to their names, and her token on their faces, and her teaching on their minds, have deserted to the enemy of England. This can *not* be answered. These people are ever busy; their names are daily in the papers; they visit out of the way places; they are gazed at in the quietest towns;—and wherever one of the grave figures passes with a dark dress, and a pale face and an Oxonian caution, he leaves an impression. The system which trained *him* must be bad. Such is our axiom; —tell an Englishman that a building is without use, and he will stare; that it is illiberal, and he will survey it; that it teaches Aristotle, and he will seem perplexed; that it don't teach science, and he won't mind; but only hint that it is the Pope, and he will arise and burn it to the ground. Some one has said this concerning Oxford; so let her be wise. Without are fightings, within are fears.

HARTLEY COLERIDGE.[1]

(1852.)

HARTLEY COLERIDGE was not like the Duke of Wellington.[2] Children are urged by the example of the great statesman and warrior just departed—not indeed to neglect "their book" as he did—but to be industrious and thrifty; to "always perform business," to "beware of procrastination," to "NEVER fail to do their best": good ideas, as may be ascertained by referring to the masterly despatches on the Mahratta transactions—"great events," as the preacher continues, "which exemplify the efficacy of diligence even in regions where the very advent of our religion is as yet but partially made known". But

> "What a wilderness were this sad world,
> If man were always man and never child!"[3]

And it were almost a worse wilderness if there were not some, to relieve the dull monotony of activity, who are children through life; who act on wayward impulse, and whose will has never come; who toil not and who spin not; who always have "fair Eden's simpleness": and of such was Hartley Coleridge. "Don't you remember," writes Gray to Horace Walpole, "when Lord B. and Sir H. C. and Viscount D., who are now great statesmen, were little dirty boys playing at cricket? For my part I do not feel one bit older or wiser now than I did then." For as some apply their minds to

[1] Hartley Coleridge's *Lives of the Northern Worthies*. A new edition. 3 vols. Moxon.

[2] This essay was published immediately after the death of the Duke of Wellington.

[3] Hartley Coleridge: "Sonnet to Childhood".

what is next them, and labour ever, and attain to governing the Tower, and entering the Trinity House,—to commanding armies, and applauding pilots,—so there are also some who are ever anxious to-day about what ought only to be considered to-morrow ; who never get on ; whom the earth neglects, and whom tradesmen little esteem ; who are where they were ; who cause grief, and are loved ; that are at once a by-word and a blessing ; who do not live in life, and it seems will not die in death : and of such was Hartley Coleridge.

A curious instance of poetic anticipation was in this instance vouchsafed to Wordsworth. When Hartley was six years old, he addressed to him these verses, perhaps the best ever written on a real and visible child :—

> " O thou, whose fancies from afar are brought,
> Who of thy words dost make a mock apparel
> And fittest to unutterable thought
> The breeze-like motion and the self-born carol ;
> Thou fairy voyager, that dost float
> In such clear water that thy boat
> May rather seem
> To brood on air than on an earthly stream ;
> O blessed vision, happy child,
> Thou art so exquisitely wild,
> I think of thee with many fears
> For what may be thy lot in future years.
> . . . . . .
> " O too industrious folly !
> O vain and causeless melancholy !
> Nature will either end thee quite,
> Or, lengthening out thy season of delight,
> Preserve for thee by individual right
> A young lamb's heart among the full-grown flocks."

And so it was. As often happens, being very little of a boy in actual childhood, Hartley preserved into manhood and age all of boyhood which he had ever possessed—its beaming imagination and its wayward will. He had none of the natural roughness of that age. He never played—partly from weakness, for he was very small, but more from awkwardness. His uncle Southey used to say he had two left hands, and might have added that they were both useless. He could no more

have achieved football, or mastered cricket, or kept in with the hounds, than he could have followed Charles's Wain or played pitch and toss with Jupiter's satellites. Nor was he very excellent at schoolwork. He showed, indeed, no deficiency. The Coleridge family have inherited from the old scholar of Ottery St. Mary a certain classical facility which could not desert the son of Samuel Taylor. But his real strength was in his own mind. All children have a world of their own, as distinct from that of the grown people who gravitate around them as the dreams of girlhood from our prosaic life; as the ideas of the kitten that plays with the falling leaves, from those of her carnivorous mother that catches mice and is sedulous in her domestic duties. But generally about this interior existence children are dumb. You have warlike ideas, but you cannot say to a sinewy relative, "My dear aunt, I wonder when the big bush in the garden will begin to walk about; I'm sure it's a crusader, and I was cutting it all the day with my steel sword. But what do you think, aunt, for I'm puzzled about its legs, because you see, aunt, it has only *one* stalk; and besides, aunt, the leaves." You cannot remark this in secular life; but you hack at the infelicitous bush till you do not altogether reject the idea that your small garden is Palestine, and yourself the most adventurous of knights. Hartley had this, of course, like any other dreamy child, but in his case it was accompanied with the faculty of speech, and an extraordinary facility in continuous story-telling. In the very earliest childhood he had conceived a complete outline of a country like England, whereof he was king himself, and in which there were many wars, and rumours of wars, and foreign relations and statesmen, and rebels and soldiers. "My people, Derwent," he used to begin, "are giving me much pain; they want to go to war." This faculty, as was natural, showed itself before he went to school, but he carried on the habit of fanciful narration even into that bleak and ungenial region. "It was not," says his brother, "by a series of tales, but by one continuous tale, regularly evolved, and possessing a real unity, that he enchained the attention of his auditors, night after night, as we lay in bed, for a space of

years, and not unfrequently for hours together." . . . "There was certainly," he adds, "a great variety of persons sharply characterised, who appeared on the stage in combination and not in succession." Connected, in Hartley, with this premature development of the imagination, there was a singular deficiency in what may be called the *sense* of reality. It is alleged that he hardly knew that Ejuxrea, which is the name of his kingdom, was not as solid a *terra firma* as Keswick or Ambleside. The deficiency showed itself on other topics. His father used to tell a story of his metaphysical questioning. When he was about five years old, he was asked, doubtless by the paternal metaphysician, some question as to why he was called Hartley. "Which Hartley?" replied the boy. "Why, is there more than one Hartley?" "Yes, there is a deal of Hartleys; there is Picture Hartley (Hazlitt had painted a picture of him), and Shadow Hartley, and there's Echo Hartley, and there's Catchmefast Hartley," seizing his own arm very eagerly, and as if reflecting on the "summject and ommject," which is to say, being in hopeless confusion. We do not hear whether he was puzzled and perplexed by such difficulties in later life; and the essays which we are reviewing, though they contain much keen remark on the detail of human character, are destitute of the Germanic profundities; they do not discuss how existence is possible, nor enumerate the pure particulars of the soul itself. But considering the idle dreaminess of his youth and manhood, we doubt if Hartley ever got over his preliminary doubts—ever properly grasped the idea of fact and reality. This is not nonsense. If you attend acutely, you may observe that in few things do people differ more than in their perfect and imperfect realisation of this earth. To the Duke of Wellington a coat was a coat; "there was no mistake"; no reason to disbelieve it; and he carried to his grave a perfect and indubitable persuasion that he really did (what was his best exploit), without fluctuation, *shave* on the morning of the battle of Waterloo. You could not have made him doubt it. But to many people who will never be Field-Marshals, there is on such points, not rational doubt, but instinctive questioning. "Who the devil," said Lord Byron,

"could *make* such a world? No one, I believe." "Cast your thoughts," says a very different writer,[1] "back on the time when our ancient buildings were first reared. Consider the churches all around us; how many generations have passed since stone was put upon stone, till the whole edifice was finished! The first movers and instruments of its erection, the minds that planned it, and the limbs that wrought at it, the pious hands that contributed to it, and the holy lips that consecrated it, have long, long ago been taken away, yet we benefit by their good deed. Does it not seem strange that men should be able, not merely by acting on others, not by a continued influence carried on through many minds in succession, but by a single direct act, to come into contact with us, and, as if with their own hand, to benefit us who live centuries later?" Or again, speaking of the lower animals: "Can anything be more marvellous or startling, than that we should have a race of beings about us, whom we do but see, and as little know their state, or can describe their interests or their destiny, as we can tell of the inhabitants of the sun and moon? It is indeed a very overpowering thought, that we hold intercourse with creatures who are as much strangers to us, as mysterious as if they were the fabulous, unearthly beings, more powerful than man, and yet his slaves, which Eastern superstitions have invented. . . . Cast your thoughts abroad on the whole number of them, large and small, in vast forests, or in the water, or in the air, and then say whether the presence of such countless multitudes, so various in their natures, so strange and wild in their shapes, is not" as incredible as anything can be. We go into a street, and see it thronged with men, and we say, Is it *true*, *are* there these men? We look on a creeping river, till we say, *Is* there this river? We enter the law courts: we watch the patient Chancellor: we hear the droning wigs:—surely this is not real,—this is a dream,—nobody would do *that*,—it is a delusion. We are really, as the sceptics insinuate, but "sensations and impressions," in groups or alone, that float up and down; or, as the poet teaches, phantoms and images, whose idle stir but mocks

[1] John Henry Newman.

the calm reality of the "pictures on the wall". All this will be called dreamy; but it is exactly because it *is* dreamy that we notice it. Hartley Coleridge was a dreamer: he began with Ejuxrea, and throughout his years, he but slumbered and slept. Life was to him a floating haze, a disputable mirage: you must not treat him like a believer in stocks and stones—you might as well say he was a man of business.

Hartley's school education is not worth recounting; but beside and along with it there was another education, on every side of him, singularly calculated to bring out the peculiar aptitudes of an imaginative mind, yet exactly, on that very account, very little likely to bring it down to fact and reality, to mix it with miry clay, or define its dreams by a daily reference to the common and necessary earth. He was bred up in the house of Mr. Southey, where, more than anywhere else in all England, it was held that literature and poetry are the aim and object of every true man, and that grocery and other affairs lie beneath at a wholly immeasurable distance, to be attended to by the inferior animals. In Hartley's case the seed fell on fitting soil. In youth, and even in childhood, he was a not unintelligent listener to the unspeakable talks of the Lake poets.

"It was so," writes his brother, "rather than by a regular course of study, that he was educated; by desultory reading, by the living voice of Coleridge, Southey, and Wordsworth, Lloyd, Wilson, and De Quincey; and again, by homely familiarity with townsfolk and countryfolk of every degree; lastly, by daily recurring hours of solitude—by lonely wanderings with the murmur of the Brathay in his ear."

Thus he lived till the time came that he should go to Oxford, and naturally enough, it seems, he went up with much hope and strong excitement; for, quiet and calm as seem those ancient dormitories, to him, as to many, the going among them seemed the first entrance into the real world—the end of torpidity—the beginning of life. He had often stood by the white Rydal Water, and thought it was coming, and now it was come in fact. At first his Oxford life was prosperous enough. An

old gentleman,[1] who believes that he too was once an undergraduate, well remembers how Hartley's eloquence was admired at wine parties and breakfast parties. "Leaning his head on one shoulder, turning up his dark bright eyes, and swinging backwards and forwards in his chair, he would hold forth by the hour, for no one wished to interrupt him, on whatever subject might have been started—either of literature, politics, or religion—with an originality of thought, a force of illustration," which the narrator doubts "if any man then living, except his father, could have surpassed." The singular gift of continuous conversation—for singular it is, if in any degree agreeable—seems to have come to him by nature, and it was through life the one quality which he relied on for attraction in society. Its being agreeable is to be accounted for mainly by its singularity; if one knew any respectable number of declaimers—if any proportion of one's acquaintance should receive the gift of the English language, and "improve each shining hour" with liquid eloquence, how we should regret their present dumb and torpid condition! If we are to be dull—which our readers will admit to be an appointment of providence—surely we will be dull in silence. Do not sermons exist, and are they not a warning to mankind?

In fact, the habit of common and continuous speech is a symptom of mental deficiency. It proceeds from not knowing what is going on in other people's minds. S. T. Coleridge, it is well known, talked to everybody, and to everybody alike; like a Christian divine, he did not regard persons. "That is a fine opera, Mr. Coleridge," said a young lady, some fifty years back. "Yes, ma'am; and I remember Kant somewhere makes a very similar remark, for, as *we* know, the idea of philosophical infinity——" Now, this sort of talk will answer with two sorts of people—with comfortable, stolid, solid people, who don't understand it at all—who don't feel that they ought to understand it—who feel that they ought not—that *they* are to sell treacle and appreciate figs—but that there *is* this transcendental superlunary sphere, which is known to others—which is now revealed in the spiritual speaker, the unmitigated oracle, the

[1] Rev. Alexander Dyce.

evidently celestial sound. That the dreamy orator himself has no more notion what is passing in their minds than they have what is running through his, is of no consequence at all. If he did know it, he would be silent; he would be jarred to feel how utterly he was misunderstood; it would break the flow of his everlasting words. Much better that he should run on in a never-pausing stream, and that the wondering rustics should admire for ever. The basis of the entertainment is that neither should comprehend the other.—But in a degree yet higher is the society of an omniscient orator agreeable to a second sort of people,—generally young men, and particularly—as in Hartley's case—clever undergraduates. All young men like what is theatrical, and by a fine dispensation all clever young men like notions. They want to hear about opinions, to know about opinions. The ever-flowing rhetorician gratifies both propensions. He is a notional *spectacle*. Like the sophist of old, he *is* something and says something. The vagabond speculator in all ages will take hold on those who wish to reason, and want premises—who wish to argue, and want theses—who desire demonstrations, and have but presumptions. And so it was acceptable enough that Hartley should make the low tones of his musical voice glide sweetly and spontaneously through the cloisters of Merton, debating the old questions, the "fate, free-will, foreknowledge,"—the points that Ockham and Scotus propounded in these same enclosures—the common riddles, the everlasting enigmas of mankind. It attracts the scorn of middle-aged men (who depart *πρὸς τὰ ἱερά*, and fancy they are wise), but it is a pleasant thing, that impact of hot thought upon hot thought, of young thought upon young thought, of new thought upon new thought. It comes to the fortunate once, but to no one a second time thereafter for ever.

Nor was Hartley undistinguished in the regular studies of the University. A regular, exact, accurate scholar he never was; but even in his early youth he perhaps knew much more and understood much more of ancient literature than seven score of schoolmasters and classmen. He had, probably, in his mind a picture of the ancient world, or of some of it, while the dry *literati* only know the combinations and permutations

of the Greek alphabet. There is a pleasant picture of him at this epoch, recorded by an eye-witness. "My attention," he narrates, "was at first aroused by seeing from a window a figure flitting about amongst the trees and shrubs of the garden with quick and agitated motion. This was Hartley, who, in the ardour of preparing for his college examination, did not even take his meals with the family, but snatched a hasty morsel in his own apartment, and only sought the free air when the fading daylight prevented him from seeing his books. Having found who he was that so mysteriously flitted about the garden, I was determined to lose no time in making his acquaintance, and through the instrumentality of Mrs. Coleridge I paid Hartley a visit in what he called his den. This was a room afterwards converted by Mr. Southey"—as what chink was not?—"into a supplementary library, but then appropriated as a study to Hartley, and presenting a most picturesque and student-like disorder of scattered pamphlets and folios." This is not a picture of the business-like reading man—one wonders what fraction of his time he did read—but it was probably the happiest period of his life. There was no coarse prosaic action there. Much musing, little studying,—fair scholarship, an atmosphere of the classics, curious fancies, much perusing of pamphlets, light thoughts on heavy folios—these make the meditative poet, but not the technical and patient-headed scholar; yet, after all, he was happy, and obtained a second class.

A more suitable exercise, as it would have seemed at first sight, was supplied by that curious portion of Oxford routine, the Annual Prize Poem. This, he himself tells us, was, in his academic years, the real and single object of his ambition. His reason is, for an autobiographical reason, decidedly simple. "A great poet," he says, "I should not have imagined myself, for I knew well enough that the verses were no great things." But he entertained at that period of life—he was twenty-one—a favourable opinion of young ladies; and he seems to have ascertained, possibly from actual trial, that verses were not in themselves a very emphatic attraction. Singular as it may sound, the ladies selected were not only insensible to what is,

after all, a metaphysical line, the distinction between good poetry and bad, but were almost indifferent to poetry itself. Yet the experiment was not quite conclusive. Verses might fail in common life, and yet succeed in the Sheldonian theatre. It is plain that they would be *read out;* it occurred to him, as he naïvely relates, that if he should appear "as a prizeman," "as an intelligible reciter of poetry," he would be an object of "some curiosity to the fair promenaders in Christchurch Meadow"; that the young ladies "with whom he was on bowing and speaking terms might have felt a satisfaction in being known to know me, which they had never experienced before". "I should," he adds, "have deemed myself a prodigious lion, and it was a character I was weak enough to covet more than that of poet, scholar, or philosopher."

In fact, he did not get the prize. The worthy East Indian who imagined that, in leaving a bequest for a prize to poetry, he should be as sure of possessing poetry for his money as of eggs, if he had chosen eggs, or butter, if he had chosen butter, did not estimate rightly the nature of poetry, or the nature of the human mind. The mechanical parts of rhythm and metre are all that a writer can be certain of producing, or that a purchaser can be sure of obtaining; and these an industrious person will find in any collection of the Newdegate poems, together with a fine assortment of similes and sentiments, respectively invented and enjoined by Shem and Japhet for and to the use of after generations. And there is a peculiar reason why a great poet (besides his being, as a man of genius, rather more likely than another, to find a difficulty in the preliminary technicalities of art) should not obtain an academical prize, to be given for excellent verses to people of about twenty-one. It is a bad season. "The imagination," said a great poet of the very age, "of a boy is healthy, and the mature imagination of a man is healthy, but there is a space of life between, in which the soul is in a ferment, the character undecided, the way of life uncertain, the ambition thick-sighted."[1] And particularly in a real poet, where the disturbing influences of passion and fancy are most likely to be in excess, will this un-

[1] Keats in the Preface to "Endymion".

healthy tinge be most likely to be excessive and conspicuous. Nothing in the style of "Endymion" would have a chance of a prize; there are no complete conceptions, no continuance of adequate words. What is worse, there are no defined thoughts, or aged illustrations. The characteristic of the whole is beauty and novelty, but it is beauty which is not formed, and novelty which is strange and wavering. Some of these defects are observable in the copy of verses on the "Horses of Lysippus," which Hartley Coleridge contributed to the list of unsuccessful attempts. It does not contain so much originality as we might have expected; on such a topic we anticipated more nonsense; a little, we are glad to say, there is, and also that there is an utter want of those even raps which are the music of prize poems,—which were the right rhythm for Pope's elaborate sense, but are quite unfit for dreamy classics or contemplative enthusiasm. If Hartley, like Pope, had been the son of a shopkeeper, he would not have received the paternal encouragement, but rather a reprimand,—"Boy, boy, these be bad rhymes"; and so, too, believed a grizzled and cold examiner.

A much worse failure was at hand. He had been elected to a Fellowship, in what was at that time the only open foundation in Oxford, Oriel College: an event which shows more exact scholarship in Hartley, or more toleration in the academical authorities for the grammatical delinquencies of a superior man, than we should have been inclined, *a priori*, to attribute to either of them. But it soon became clear that Hartley was not exactly suited to that place. Decorum is the essence, pomposity the advantage, of tutors. These Hartley had not. Beside the serious defects which we shall mention immediately, he was essentially an absent and musing, and therefore at times a highly indecorous man; and though not defective in certain kinds of vanity, there was no tinge in his manner of scholastic dignity. A schoolmaster should have an atmosphere of awe, and walk wonderingly, as if he was amazed at being himself. But an excessive sense of the ludicrous disabled Hartley altogether from the acquisition of this valuable habit; perhaps he never really attempted to obtain it. He

accordingly never became popular as a tutor, nor was he ever described as "exercising an influence over young persons". Moreover, however excellently suited Hartley's eloquence might be to the society of undergraduates, it was out of place at the Fellows' table. This is said to be a dull place. The excitement of early thought has passed away; the excitements of active manhood are unknown. A certain torpidity seems natural there. We find too that, probably for something to say, he was in those years rather fond of exaggerated denunciation of the powers that be. This is not the habit most grateful to the Heads of Houses. "Sir," said a great authority, "do you deny that Lord Derby ought to be Prime Minister? you might as well say, that I ought not to be Warden of So and So." These habits rendered poor Hartley no favourite with the leading people of his college, and no great prospective shrewdness was required to predict that he would fare but ill, if any sufficient occasion should be found for removing from the place a person so excitable and so little likely to be of use in inculcating "safe" opinions among the surrounding youth.

Unhappily, the visible morals of Hartley offered an easy occasion. It is not quite easy to gather from the narrative of his brother the exact nature or full extent of his moral delinquencies; but enough is shown to warrant, according to the rules, the unfavourable judgment of the collegiate authorities. He describes, probably truly, the commencement of his errors—"I verily believe that I should have gone crazy, silly, mad with vanity, had I obtained the prize for my 'Horses of Lysippus'. It was the only occasion in my life wherein I was keenly disappointed, for it was the only one upon which I felt any confident hope. I had made myself very sure of it; and the intelligence that not I but Macdonald was the lucky man, absolutely stupefied me; yet I contrived for a time to lose all sense of my misfortunes in exultation for Burton's success. . . . I sang, I danced, I whistled, I ran from room to room, announcing the great tidings, and trying to persuade myself that I cared nothing at all for my own case. But it would not do. It was bare sands with me the next day. It was not the mere loss of the prize, but the feeling or phantasy of an adverse des-

tiny. . . . I foresaw that all my aims and hopes would prove frustrate and abortive; and from that time I date my downward declension, my impotence of will, and my melancholy recklessness. It was the first time I sought relief in wine, which, as usual in such cases, produced not so much intoxication as downright madness." Cast in an uncongenial society, requiring to live in an atmosphere of respect and affection—and surrounded by gravity and distrust—misconstrued and half tempted to maintain the misconstruction; with the waywardness of childhood without the innocency of its impulses; with the passions of manhood without the repressive vigour of a man's will,—he lived as a woman lives that is lost and forsaken, who sins ever and hates herself for sinning, but who sins, perhaps, more on that very account; because she requires some relief from the keenness of her own reproach; because, in her morbid fancy, the idea is ever before her; because her petty will is unable to cope with the daily craving and the horrid thought—that she may not lose her own identity—that she may not give in to the rigid, the distrustful, and the calm.

There is just this excuse for Hartley, whatever it may be worth, that the weakness was hereditary. We do not as yet know, it seems most likely that we shall never know, the precise character of his father. But with all the discrepancy concerning the details, enough for our purpose is certain of the outline. We know that he lived many and long years a prey to weaknesses and vice of this very description; and though it be false and mischievous to speak of hereditary vice, it is most true and wise to observe the mysterious fact of hereditary temptation. Doubtless it is strange that the nobler emotions and the inferior impulses, their peculiar direction or their proportionate strength, the power of a fixed idea—that the inner energy of the very will, which seems to issue from the inmost core of our complex nature, and to typify, if anything does, the pure essence of the immortal soul—that these and such as these should be transmitted by material descent, as though they were an accident of the body, the turn of an eye-brow or the feebleness of a joint,—if this were not obvious, it would be as amazing, perhaps more amazing, than any fact which we know; it

looks not only like predestinated, but even heritable election. But, explicable or inexplicable—to be wondered at or not wondered at—the fact is clear; tendencies and temptations are transmitted even to the fourth generation both for good and for evil, both in those who serve God and in those who serve Him not. Indeed, the weakness before us seems essentially connected—perhaps we may say on a final examination essentially identical—with the dreaminess of mind, the inapprehensiveness of reality which we remarked upon before. Wordsworth used to say, that "at a particular stage of his mental progress he used to be frequently so wrapt into an unreal transcendental world of ideas, that the external world seemed no longer to exist in relation to him, and he had to convince himself of its existence by *clasping a tree* or something that happened to be near him". But suppose a mind which did not feel acutely the sense of reality which others feel, in hard contact with the tangible universe; which was blind to the distinction between the palpable and the impalpable, or rather lived in the latter in preference to, and nearly to the exclusion of, the former. What is to fix such a mind, what is to strengthen it, to give it a fulcrum? To exert itself, the will, like the arm, requires to have an obvious and a definite resistance, to know where it is, why it is, whence it comes, and whither it goes. "We are such stuff as dreams are made of," says Prospero. So, too, the difficulty of Shakespeare's greatest dreamer, Hamlet, is that he cannot quite believe that his duty is to be done where it lies, and immediately. Partly from the natural effect of a vision of a spirit which is not, but more from native constitution and instinctive bent, he is for ever speculating on the reality of existence, the truth of the world. "How," discusses Kant, "is Nature in general possible?" and so asked Hamlet too. With this feeling on his mind, persuasion is useless and argument in vain. Examples gross as earth exhort him, but they produce no effect; but he thinks and thinks the more.

> "Now whether it be
> Bestial oblivion, or some craven scruple
> Of thinking too precisely on the event,—
> A thought which quarter'd hath but one part wisdom

> And ever three parts coward,—I do not know
> Why yet I live to say, 'This thing's to do,'
> Sith I have cause and will and strength and means
> To do 't." [1]

Hartley himself well observes that on such a character the likelihood of action is inversely as the force of the motive and the time for deliberation. The stronger the reason, the more certain the scepticism. *Can* anything be so certain? Does not the excess of the evidence alleged make it clear that there is something behind, something on the other side? Search then diligently lest anything be overlooked. Reflection "puzzles the will," Necessity "benumbs like a torpedo": and so

> "The native hue of resolution
> Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,
> And enterprises of great pith and moment
> With this regard, their currents turn awry,
> And lose the name of action".[2]

Why should we say any more? We do but "chant snatches of old tunes". But in estimating men like the Coleridges—the son even more than the father—we must take into account this peculiar difficulty—this dreamy unbelief—this daily scepticism—this haunting unreality—and imagine that some may not be quite responsible either for what they do, or for what they do not—because they are bewildered, and deluded, and perplexed, and want the faculty as much to comprehend their difficulty as to subdue it.

The Oxford life of Hartley is all his life. The failure of his prospects there, in his brother's words, "deprived him of the residue of his years". The biography afterwards goes to and fro—one attempt after another failing, some beginning in much hope, but even the sooner for that reason issuing in utter despair. His literary powers came early to full perfection. For some time after his expulsion from Oriel he was resident in London, and the poems written there are equal, perhaps are superior, to any which he afterwards produced. This sonnet may serve as a specimen:—

[1] Shakespeare: "Hamlet". [2] *Ibid.*

"In the great city we are met again
Where many souls there are, that breathe and die
Scarce knowing more of Nature's potency
Than what they learn from heat or cold or rain,
The sad vicissitude of weary pain :—
For busy man is lord of ear and eye,
And what hath Nature, but the vast, void sky,
And the throng'd river toiling to the main ?
Oh ! say not so, for she shall have her part
In every smile, in every tear that falls,
And she shall hide her in the secret heart
Where love persuades and sterner duty calls ;
But worse it were than death or sorrow's smart,
To live without a friend within these walls."

He soon, however, went down to the Lakes, and there, except during one or two short intervals, he lived and died. This exception was a residence at Leeds, during which he brought out, besides a volume containing his best poems, the book which stands at the head of our article—the *Lives of Northern Worthies.* We selected the book, we confess, with the view mainly of bringing a remarkable character before the notice of our readers—but in itself the work is an excellent one, and of a rare kind.

Books are for various purposes—tracts to teach, almanacs to sell, poetry to make pastry, but this is the rarest sort of book, a book to *read.* As Dr. Johnson said, "Sir, a good book is one you can hold in your hand, and take to the fire". Now there are extremely few books which can, with any propriety, be so treated. When a great author, as Grote or Gibbon, has devoted a whole life of horrid industry to the composition of a large history, one feels one ought not to touch it with a mere hand—it is not respectful. The idea of slavery hovers over the *Decline and Fall.* Fancy a stiffly dressed gentleman, in a stiff chair, slowly writing that stiff compilation in a stiff hand : it is enough to stiffen you for life. Or is poetry readable? Of course it is rememberable ; when you have it in the mind, it clings ; if by heart, it haunts. Imagery comes from it ; songs which lull the ear, heroines that waste the time. But this Biographia is actually read ; a man is glad to take it up, and slow to lay it down ; it is a book

which is truly valuable, for it is truly pleasing; and which a man who has once had it in his library would miss from his shelves, not only in the common way, by a physical vacuum, but by a mental deprivation. This strange quality it owes to a peculiarity of style. Many people give many theories of literary composition, and Dr. Blair, whom we will read, is sometimes said to have exhausted the subject; but, unless he has proved the contrary, we believe that the knack in style is to write like a human being. Some think they must be wise, some elaborate, some concise; Tacitus wrote like a pair of stays; some startle as Thomas Carlyle, or a comet, inscribing with his tail. But legibility is given to those who neglect these notions, and are willing to be themselves, to write their own thoughts in their own words, in the simplest words, in the words wherein they were thought; and such, and so great, was in this book the magnanimity of Hartley.

As has been said, from his youth onwards, Hartley's outward life was a simple blank. Much writing, and much musing, some intercourse with Wordsworth, some talking to undergraduate readers or Lake ladies, great loneliness, and much intercourse with the farmers of Cumberland—these pleasures, simple enough, most of them, were his life. The extreme pleasure of the peasantry in his conversation, is particularly remarked. "Aye, but Mr. Coleridge talks fine," observed one. "I would go through fire and water for Mr. C.," interjected another. His father, with real wisdom, had provided (in part, at least) for his necessary wants in the following manner:—

"This is a codicil to my last will and testament.

"S. T. COLERIDGE.

"Most desirous to secure, as far as in me lies, for my dear son Hartley, the tranquillity essential to any continued and successful exertion of his literary talents, and which, from the like characters of our minds in this respect, I know to be especially requisite for his happiness, and persuaded that he will recognise in this provision that anxious affection by which it is dictated, I affix this codicil to my last will and testament. . . . And I hereby request them (the said trustees) to hold the sum accruing to Hartley Coleridge from the equal division of my total bequest between him, his brother Derwent, and his sister Sara, after his mother's decease, to dispose

of the interests or proceeds of the same portion to or for the use of my dear son Hartley Coleridge, at such time or times, in such manner, or under such conditions, as they, the trustees above named, know to be my wish, and shall deem conducive to the attainment of my object in adding the codicil, namely, the anxious wish to ensure for my son the continued means of a home, in which I comprise board, lodging, and raiment. Providing that nothing in this codicil shall be so interpreted as to interfere with my son H. C.'s freedom of choice respecting his place of residence, or with his power of disposing of his portion by will after his decease according as his own judgments and affections may decide."

An excellent provision, which would not, however, by the English law, have disabled the "said Hartley" from depriving himself of "the continued means of a home" by alienating the principal of the bequest; since the jurisprudence of this country has no legal definition of "prodigality," and does not consider any person incompetent to manage his pecuniary affairs unless he be quite and certainly insane. Yet there undoubtedly are persons, and poor Hartley was one of them, who though in general perfectly sane, and even with superior powers of thought or fancy, are as completely unable as the most helpless lunatic to manage any pecuniary transactions, and to whom it would be a great gain to have perpetual guardians and compulsory trustees. But such people are rare, and few principles are so English as the maxim *de minimis non curat lex.*

He lived in this way for thirty years, or nearly so, but there is nothing to tell of all that time. He died 6th January, 1849, and was buried in Grasmere churchyard—the quietest place in England, "by the yews," as Arnold says, "that Wordsworth planted, the Rotha with its big silent pools passing by". It was a shining January day when Hartley was borne to the grave. "Keep the ground for us," said Mr. Wordsworth to the sexton; "we are old, and it cannot be long."

We have described Hartley's life at length for a peculiar reason. It is necessary to comprehend his character, to appreciate his works; and there is no way of delineating character but by a selection of characteristic sayings and actions. All poets, as is commonly observed, are delineated in their poems, but in very different modes. Each minute event in the melancholy life of Shelley is frequently alluded

to in his writings. The tender and reverential character of Virgil is everywhere conspicuous in his pages. It is clear that Chaucer was shrewd. We seem to have talked with Shakespeare, though we have forgotten the facts of his life; but it is not by minute allusion, or a tacit influence, or a genial and delightful sympathy, that a writer like Hartley Coleridge leaves the impress of himself, but in a more direct manner, which it will take a few words to describe.

Poetry begins in Impersonality. Homer is a voice—a fine voice, a fine eye, and a brain that drew with light; and this is all we know. The natural subjects of the first art are the scenes and events in which the first men naturally take an interest. They don't care—who does?—for a kind old man; but they want to hear of the exploits of their ancestors—of the heroes of their childhood—of them that their fathers saw—of the founders of their own land—of wars, and rumours of wars—of great victories boldly won—of heavy defeats firmly borne—of desperate disasters unsparingly retrieved. So in all countries—Siegfried, or Charlemagne, or Arthur—they are but attempts at an Achilles: the subject is the same—the *κλέα ἀνδρῶν* and the death that comes to all. But then the mist of battles passes away, and the sound of the daily conflict no longer hurtles in the air, and a generation arises skilled with the skill of peace, and refined with the refinement of civilisation, yet still remembering the old world, still appreciating the old life, still wondering at the old men, and ready to receive, at the hand of the poet, a new telling of the old tale—a new idealisation of the legendary tradition. This is the age of dramatic art, when men wonder at the big characters of old, as schoolboys at the words of Æschylus, and try to find in their own breasts the roots of those monstrous, but artistically developed impersonations. With civilisation too comes another change: men wish not only to tell what they have seen, but also to express what they are conscious of. Barbarians feel only hunger, and that is not lyrical; but as time runs on, arise gentler emotions and finer moods and more delicate desires which need expression, and require from the artist's fancy the lightest touches and the most soothing and insinuat-

ing words. Lyrical poetry, too, as we know, is of various kinds. Some, as the war song, approach to the epic, depict events and stimulate to triumph; others are love songs to pour out wisdom, others sober to describe champagne; some passive and still, and expressive of the higher melancholy, as Gray's "Elegy in a Country Churchyard". But with whatever differences of species and class, the essence of lyrical poetry remains in all identical; it is designed to express, and when successful does express, some one mood, some single sentiment, some isolated longing in human nature. It deals not with man as a whole, but with man piecemeal, with man in a scenic aspect, with man in a peculiar light. Hence lyrical poets must not be judged literally from their lyrics: they are discourses; they require to be reduced into the scale of ordinary life, to be stripped of the enraptured element, to be clogged with gravitating prose. Again, moreover, and in course of time, the advance of ages and the progress of civilisation appear to produce a new species of poetry which is distinct from the lyrical, though it grows out of it, and contrasted with the epic, though in a single respect it exactly resembles it. This kind may be called the *self-delineative*, for in it the poet deals not with a particular desire, sentiment, or inclination in his own mind, not with a special phase of his own character, not with his love of war, his love of ladies, his melancholy, but with his mind viewed as a whole, with the entire essence of his own character. The first requisite of this poetry is truth. It is, in Plato's phrase, the soul "itself by itself" aspiring to view and take account of the particular notes and marks that distinguish it from all other souls. The sense of reality is necessary to excellence; the poet being himself, speaks like one who has authority; he knows and must not deceive. This species of poetry, of course, adjoins on the lyrical, out of which it historically arises. Such a poem as the "Elegy" is, as it were, on the borders of the two; for while it expresses but a single emotion, meditative, melancholy, you seem to feel that this sentiment is not only then and for a moment the uppermost, but (as with Gray it was) the habitual mood, the pervading emotion of his whole

life. Moreover, in one especial peculiarity, this sort of poetry is analogous to the narrative or epic. No two things certainly can, in a general aspect, be more distantly removed one from another, the one dealing in external objects and stirring events, the other with the stillness and repose of the poet's mind; but still in a single characteristic the two coincide. They describe character, as the painters say, *in mass*. The defect of the drama is, that it can delineate only motion. If a thoughtful person will compare the character of Achilles, as we find it in Homer, with the more surpassing creations of dramatic invention, say with Lear or Othello, he will perhaps feel that character in repose, character on the lonely beach, character in marble, character in itself, is more clearly and perfectly seen in the epic narrative, than in the conversational drama. It of course requires immense skill to make mere talk exhibit a man as he is ἑτάρων ἄτερ. Now this quality of epic poetry the self-delineative precisely shares with it. It describes a character—the poet's—alone by itself. And therefore, when the great master in both kinds did not hesitate to turn aside from his "high argument" to say—

> "More safe I sing with mortal voice unchanged
> To hoarse or mute, though fallen on evil days,"[1]

pedants may prose as they please about the "impropriety" of "interspersing" species of composition which are by nature remote; but Milton felt more profoundly that in its treatment of character the egotistical poetry is allied to the epic; that he was putting together elements which would harmoniously combine; that he was but exerting the same faculties in either case—being guided thereto by a sure instinct, the desire of genius to handle and combine every one of the subjects on which it is genius.

Now it is in this self-delineative species of poetry that, in our judgment, Hartley Coleridge has attained to nearly, if not quite, the highest excellence; it pervades his writings everywhere. But a few sonnets may be quoted to exemplify it:—

[1] *Paradise Lost.*

"We parted on the mountains, as two streams
From one clear spring pursue their several ways;
And thy fleet course has been through many a maze
In foreign lands, where silvery Padus gleams
To that delicious sky, whose glowing beams
Brightened the tresses that old poets praise,
Where Petrarch's patient love and artful lays,
And Ariosto's song of many themes,
Moved the soft air.—But I, a lazy brook,
As close pent up within my native dell,
Have crept along from nook to shady nook,
Where flow'rets blow and whispering Naiads dwell.
Yet now we meet that parted were so wide,
For rough and smooth to travel side by side.

"Once I was young, and fancy was my all,
My love, my joy, my grief, my hope, my fear,
And ever-ready as an infant's tear,
Whate'er in Fancy's kingdom might befall,
Some quaint device had Fancy still at call,
With seemly verse to greet the coming cheer;
Such grief to sooth, such airy hope to rear,
To sing the birth-song, or the funeral
Of such light love, it was a pleasant task;
But ill accord the quirks of wayward glee
That wears affliction for a wanton mask,
With woes that bear not Fancy's livery;
With Hope that scorns of Fate its fate to ask
But is itself its own sure destiny.

"Too true it is my time of power was spent
In idly watering weeds of casual growth,
That wasted energy to desperate sloth
Declined, and fond self-seeking discontent;
That the huge debt for all that nature lent
I sought to cancel,—and was nothing loth,
To deem myself an outlaw, severed both
From duty and from hope,—yea, blindly sent
Without an errand where I would to stray;
Too true it is, that knowing now my state,
I weakly mourn the sin I ought to hate,
Nor love the law I yet would fain obey;
But true it is, above all law and fate
Is Faith, abiding the appointed day.

"Long time a child, and still a child when years
Had painted manhood on my cheek, was I;

For yet I lived like one not born to die,
A thriftless prodigal of smiles and tears;
No hope I needed, and I knew no fears.
But sleep, though sweet, is only sleep, and waking,
I waked to sleep no more, at once o'ertaking
The vanguard of my age, with all arrears
Of duty on my back. Nor child, nor man,
Nor youth, nor sage, I find my head is grey,
For I have lost the race I never ran;
A rathe December blights my lagging May;
And still I am a child, tho' I be old,
Time is my debtor for my years untold."

Indeed, the whole series of sonnets with which the earliest and best work of Hartley began is (with a casual episode on others) mainly and essentially a series on himself. Perhaps there is something in the structure of the sonnet rather adapted to this species of composition. It is too short for narrative, too artificial for the intense passions, too complex for the simple, too elaborate for the domestic; but in an impatient world where there is not a premium on self-describing, who so would speak of himself must be wise and brief, artful and composed —and in these respects he will be aided by the concise dignity of the tranquil sonnet.

It is remarkable that in this, too, Hartley Coleridge resembled his father. Turn over the early poems of S. T. Coleridge, the minor poems (we exclude "The Ancient Mariner" and "Christabel," which are his epics), but the small shreds which Bristol worshipped and Cottle paid for, and you will be disheartened by utter dulness. Taken on a decent average, and perhaps excluding a verse here and there, it really seems to us that they are inferior to the daily works of the undeserving and multiplied poets. If any reader will peruse any six of the several works intituled *Poems by a Young Gentleman*, we believe he will find the refined anonymity less insipid than the small productions of Samuel Taylor. There will be less puff and less ostentation. The reputation of the latter was caused not by their merit but by their time. Fifty years ago people believed in metre, and it is plain that Coleridge (Southey may be added, for that matter) believed in it also; the people in Bristol said that these two were wonderful men, because they

had written wonderfully small verses; and such is human vanity, that both for a time accepted the creed. In Coleridge, who had large speculative sense, the hallucination was not permanent—there are many traces that he rated his Juvenilia at their value; but poor Southey, who lived with domestic women, actually died in the delusion that his early works were perfect, except that he tried to "amend" the energy out of "Joan of Arc," which was the only good thing in it. His wife did not doubt that he had produced stupendous works. Why, then, should he? But experience has now shown that a certain metrical facility, and a pleasure in the metrical expression of certain sentiments, are in youth extremely common. Many years ago, Mr. Moore is reported to have remarked to Sir Walter Scott, that hardly a magazine was then published which did not contain verses that would have made a sensation when they were young men. "Confound it, Tom," was the reply, "what luck it was *we* were born before all these fellows." And though neither Moore nor Scott are to be confounded with the nameless and industrious versifiers of the present day, yet it must be allowed that they owed to their time and their position—to the small quantity of rhyme in the market of the moment, and the extravagant appreciation of their early productions—much of that popular encouragement which induced them to labour upon more excellent compositions and to train themselves to write what they will be remembered by. But, dismissing these considerations, and returning to the minor poems of S. T. Coleridge, although we fearlessly assert that it is impossible for any sane man to set any value on—say the "Religious Musings"—an absurd attempt to versify an abstract theory, or the essay on the Pixies, who had more fun in them than the reader of it could suspect—it still is indisputable that scattered here and there through these poems, there are lines about himself (lines, as he said in later life, "in which the subjective object views itself subjectivo-objectively") which rank high in that form of art. Of this kind are the "Tombless Epitaph," for example, or the lines,—

> "To me hath Heaven with bounteous hand assigned
> Energic Reason and a shaping mind,

> The daring ken of truth ; the Patriot's part,
> And Pity's sigh, that breathes the gentle heart ;
> Sloth-jaundiced all ! and from my graspless hand
> Drop friendship's priceless pearls, like hour-glass sand.
> I weep, yet stoop not ! the faint anguish flows,
> A dreamy pang in morning's fev'rish doze ;" [1]

and so on. In fact, it would appear that the tendency to, and the faculty for, self-delineation are very closely connected with the dreaminess of disposition and impotence of character which we spoke of just now. Persons very subject to these can grasp no external object, comprehend no external being ; they can do no external thing, and therefore they are left to themselves. Their own character is the only one which they can view as a whole, or depict as a reality ; of every other they may have glimpses, and acute glimpses, like the vivid truthfulness of particular dreams ; but no settled appreciation, no connected development, no regular sequence whereby they may be exhibited on paper or conceived in the imagination. If other qualities are supposed to be identical, those will be most egotistical who only know themselves ; the people who talk most of themselves will be those who talk best.

In the execution of minor verses, we think we could show that Hartley should have the praise of surpassing his father ; but nevertheless it would be absurd, on a general view, to compare the two men. Samuel Taylor was so much bigger ; what there was in his son was equally good, perhaps, but then there was not much of it ; outwardly and inwardly he was essentially little. In poetry, for example, the father has produced two longish poems, which have worked themselves right down to the extreme depths of the popular memory, and stay there very firmly, in part from their strangeness, but in part from their power. Of Hartley, nothing of this kind is to be found —he could not write connectedly ; he wanted steadiness of purpose, or efficiency of will, to write so voluntarily ; and his genius did not, involuntarily, and out of its unseen workings, present him with continuous creations ; on the contrary, his mind teemed with little fancies, and a new one came before the first had attained any enormous magnitude. As his brother

[1] " Lines on a Friend " (November, 1794).

observed, he wanted "back thought". "On what plan, Mr. Coleridge, are you arranging your books?" inquired a lady. "Plan, madam? I have no plan: at first I had a principle; but then I had another, and now I do not know." The same contrast between the "shaping mind" of the father, and the gentle and minute genius of the son, is said to have been very plain in their conversation. That of Samuel Taylor was continuous, diffused, comprehensive.

> "Strongly it bears us along in swelling and limitless motion,
> Nothing before and nothing behind, but the sky and the ocean."

"Great talker, certainly," said Hazlitt, "*if* you will let him start from no *data*, and come to no conclusion." The talk of Hartley, on the contrary, though continuous in time, was detached in meaning; stating hints and observations on particular subjects; glancing lightly from side to side, but throwing no intense light on any, and exhausting none. It flowed gently over small doubts and pleasant difficulties, rippling for a minute sometimes into bombast, but lightly recovering and falling quietly in "melody back".

By way, it is likely, of compensation to Hartley for this great deficiency in what his father imagined to be his own *forte* —the power of conceiving a whole—Hartley possessed, in a considerable degree, a species of sensibility to which the former was nearly a stranger. "The mind of S. T. Coleridge," says one who had every means of knowing and observing, "was not in the least under the influence of external objects." Except in the writings produced during daily and confidential intimacy with Wordsworth (an exception that may be obviously accounted for), no trace can perhaps be found of any new image or metaphor from natural scenery. There is some story too of his going for the first time to York, and by the Minster, and never looking up at it. But Hartley's poems exhibit a great sensibility to a certain aspect of exterior nature, and great fanciful power of presenting that aspect in the most charming and attractive forms. It is likely that the London boyhood of the elder Coleridge was,—added to a strong abstractedness which was born with him,—a powerful cause in bringing about the curious mental fact, that a great poet, so susceptible to

every other species of refining and delightful feeling, should have been utterly destitute of any perception of beauty in landscape or nature. We must not forget that S. T. Coleridge was a bluecoat boy,—what do any of them know about fields? And similarly, we require in Hartley's case, before we can quite estimate his appreciation of nature, to consider his position, his circumstances, and especially his time.

Now it came to pass in those days that William Wordsworth went up into the hills. It has been attempted in recent years to establish that the object of his life was to teach Anglicanism. A whole life of him has been written by an official gentleman, with the apparent view of establishing that the great poet was a believer in rood-lofts, an idolater of piscinæ. But this is not capable of rational demonstration. Wordsworth, like Coleridge, began life as a heretic, and as the shrewd Pope unfallaciously said, "once a heretic, always a heretic". Sound men are sound from the first; safe men are safe from the beginning, and Wordsworth began wrong. His real reason for going to live in the mountains was certainly in part sacred, but it was not in the least Tractarian:—

> "For he with many feelings, many thoughts,
> Made up a meditative joy, and found
> Religious meanings in the forms of nature".[1]

His whole soul was absorbed in the one idea, the one feeling, the one thought, of the sacredness of hills.

> "Early had he learned
> To reverence the volume that displays
> The mystery, the life which cannot die;
> But in the mountains did he *feel* his faith.
> All things responsive to the writing, there
> Breathed immortality, revolving life,
> And greatness still revolving; infinite;
> There littleness was not.
> . . . . . .
> "—In the after-day
> Of boyhood, many an hour in caves forlorn,
> And 'mid the hollow depths of naked crags,
> He sate, and e'en in their fixed lineaments

[1] Coleridge: "Fears in Solitude" (1798).

Or from the power of a peculiar eye,
Or by creative feeling overborne,
Or by predominance of thought oppressed,
E'en in their fixed and steady lineaments
He traced an ebbing and a flowing mind,
Expression ever varying!"[1]

. . . . . .

"A sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man,
A motion and a spirit that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things."[2]

The defect of this religion is, that it is too abstract for the practical, and too bare for the musing. The worship of sensuous beauty—the southern religion—is of all sentiments the one most deficient in his writings. His poetry hardly even gives the charm, the entire charm, of the scenery in which he lived. The lighter parts are little noticed: the rugged parts protrude. The bare waste, the folding hill, the rough lake, Helvellyn with a brooding mist, Ulswater in a grey day: these are his subjects. He took a personal interest in the corners of the universe. There is a print of Rembrandt said to represent a piece of the Campagna, a mere waste, with a stump and a man, and under is written "Tacet et loquitur"; and thousands will pass the old print-shop where it hangs, and yet have a taste for paintings, and colours, and oils: but some fanciful students, some lonely stragglers, some long-haired enthusiasts, by chance will come, one by one, and look, and look, and be hardly able to take their eyes from the fascination, so massive is the shade, so still the conception, so firm the execution. Thus is it with Wordsworth and his poetry. *Tacet et loquitur.* Fashion apart, the million won't read it. Why should they? —they could not understand it. Don't put them out,—let them buy, and sell, and die;—but idle students, and enthusiastic wanderers, and solitary thinkers, will read, and read, and

[1] Wordsworth's "Excursion". [2] "Tintern Abbey."

read, while their lives and their occupations hold. In truth, his works are the Scriptures of the intellectual life; for that same searching, and finding, and penetrating power which the real Scripture exercises on those engaged, as are the mass of men, in practical occupations and domestic ties, do his works exercise on the meditative, the solitary, and the young.

> "His daily teachers had been woods and rills,
> The silence that is in the starry sky,
> The sleep that is among the lonely hills."[1]

And he had more than others—

> "That blessed mood,
> In which the burthen of the mystery,
> In which the heavy and the weary weight
> Of all this unintelligible world
> Is lightened: that serene and blessed mood
> In which the affections gently lead us on,
> Until the breath of this corporeal frame,
> And even the motion of our human blood
> Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
> In body, and become a living soul;
> While with an eye made quiet by the power
> Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
> We see into the life of things".[2]

And therefore he has had a whole host of sacred imitators. Mr. Keble, for example, has translated him for women. He has himself told us that he owed to Wordsworth the tendency *ad sanctiora* which is the mark of his own writings; and in fact he has but adapted the tone and habit of reverence which his master applied to common objects and the course of the seasons, to sacred objects and the course of the ecclesiastical year,—diffusing a mist of sentiment and devotion altogether delicious to a gentle and timid devotee. Hartley Coleridge is another translator. He has applied to the sensuous beauties and seductive parts of external nature the same *cultus* which Wordsworth applied to the bare and the abstract. It is—

> "That fair beauty which no eye can see,
> Of that sweet music which no ear can measure".[3]

[1] "Feast of Brougham Castle." [2] "Tintern Abbey."
[3] Hartley Coleridge: "Sonnet".

It is, as it were, female beauty in wood and water; it is Rydal Water on a shining day; it is the gloss of the world with the knowledge that it is gloss: the sense of beauty, as in some women, with the feeling that yet it is hardly theirs:—

"The vale of Tempe had in vain been fair,
Green Ida never deemed the nurse of Jove,
Each fabled stream, beneath its covert grove,
Had idly murmured to the idle air;
The shaggy wolf had kept his horrid lair
In Delphi's cell and old Trophonius' cave,
And the wild wailing of the Ionian wave
Had never blended with the sweet despair
Of Sappho's death-song,—if the sight inspired
Saw only what the visual organs show;
If heaven-born phantasy no more required
Than what within the sphere of sense may grow.
The beauty to perceive of earthly things,
The mounting soul must heavenward prune her wings." [1]

And he knew it himself: he has sketched the essence of his works:—

"Whither is gone the wisdom and the power,
That ancient sages scattered with the notes
Of thought-suggesting lyres? The music floats
In the void air; e'en at this breathing hour,
In every cell and every blooming bower,
The sweetness of old lays is hovering still;
But the strong soul, the self-constraining will,
The rugged root that bare the winsome flower,
Is weak and withered. Were we like the Fays
That sweetly nestle in the fox-glove bells,
Or lurk and murmur in the rose-lipped shells
Which Neptune to the earth for quit-rent pays;
Then might our pretty modern Philomels
Sustain our spirits with their roundelays."

We had more to say of Hartley: we were to show that his "Prometheus" was defective; that its style had no Greek severity, no defined outline; that he was a critic as well as a poet, though in a small detached way, and what is odd enough, that he could criticise in rhyme. We were to make plain how his heart was in the right place, how his love affairs were hope-

[1] Hartley Coleridge: "Sonnet".

less, how he was misled by his friends; but our time is done, and our space is full, and these topics must "go without day" of returning. We may end as we began. There are some that are bold and strong and incessant and energetic and hard, and to these is the world's glory; and some are timid and meek and impotent and cowardly and rejected and obscure. "One man esteemeth one day above another, another esteemeth every day alike." And so of Hartley, whom few regarded; he had a resource, the stillness of thought, the gentleness of musing, the peace of nature.

"To his side the fallow deer
Came and rested without fear;
The eagle, lord of land and sea,
Stooped down to pay him fealty;
And both the undying fish that swim,
In Bowscale-tarn did wait on him;
The pair were servants of his eye,
In their immortality;
And glancing, gleaming, dark or bright,
Moved to and fro for his delight.
He knew the rocks which Angels haunt
Upon the mountains visitant.
He hath kenned them taking wing,
And into caves where Fairies sing
He hath entered; and been told
By voices how men lived of old.
Among the heavens his eye can see
The face of thing that is to be,
And if that men report him right
His tongue could whisper words of might.
—Now another day is come,
Fitter hope and nobler doom,
He hath thrown aside his crook,
And hath buried deep his book." [1]

"And now the streams may sing for others' pleasure.
The hills sleep on in their eternity." [2]

He is gone from among them.

[1] "Feast of Brougham Castle."
[2] Hartley Coleridge: "Sonnet".

SHAKESPEARE—THE MAN.[1]

(1853.)

THE greatest of English poets, it is often said, is but a name. "No letter of his writing, no record of his conversation, no character of him drawn with any fulness by a contemporary," have been extracted by antiquaries from the piles of rubbish which they have sifted. Yet of no person is there a clearer picture in the popular fancy. You seem to have known Shakespeare—to have seen Shakespeare—to have been friends with Shakespeare. We would attempt a slight delineation of the popular idea which has been formed, not from loose tradition or remote research, not from what some one says some one else said that the poet said, but from data which are at least undoubted, from the sure testimony of his certain works.

Some extreme sceptics, we know, doubt whether it is possible to deduce anything as to an author's character from his works. Yet surely people do not keep a tame steam-engine to write their books; and if those books were really written by a man, he must have been a man who could write them; he must have had the thoughts which they express, have acquired the knowledge they contain, have possessed the style in which we read them. The difficulty is a defect of the critics. A person who knows nothing of an author he has read, will not know much of an author whom he has seen.

First of all, it may be said that Shakespeare's works could

[1] *Shakespeare et son Temps : Étude Littéraire.* Par M. Guizot. Paris, 1852.

Notes and Emendations to the Text of Shakespeare's Plays from early Manuscript Corrections in a Copy of the Folio, 1632, *in the possession of R. Payne Collier, Esq., F.S.A.* London, 1853.

only be produced by a first-rate imagination working on a first-rate experience. It is often difficult to make out whether the author of a poetic creation is drawing from fancy, or drawing from experience; but for art on a certain scale, the two must concur. Out of nothing, nothing can be created. Some plastic power is required, however great may be the material. And when such works as "Hamlet" and "Othello," still more, when both they and others not unequal, have been created by a single mind, it may be fairly said, that not only a great imagination but a full conversancy with the world was necessary to their production. The whole powers of man under the most favourable circumstances, are not too great for such an effort. We may assume that Shakespeare had a great experience.

To a great experience one thing is essential, an experiencing nature. It is not enough to have opportunity, it is essential to feel it. Some occasions come to all men; but to many they are of little use, and to some they are none. What, for example, has experience done for the distinguished Frenchman, the name of whose essay is prefixed to this paper? M. Guizot is the same man that he was in 1820, or, we believe, as he was in 1814. Take up one of his lectures, published before he was a practical statesman; you will be struck with the width of view, the amplitude and the solidity of the reflections; you will be amazed that a mere literary teacher could produce anything so wise; but take up afterwards an essay published since his fall—and you will be amazed to find no more. Napoleon the First is come and gone—the Bourbons of the old *régime* have come and gone—the Bourbons of the new *régime* have had their turn. M. Guizot has been first minister of a citizen king; he has led a great party; he has pronounced many a great *discours* that was well received by the second elective assembly in the world. But there is no trace of this in his writings. No one would guess from them that their author had ever left the professor's chair. It is the same, we are told, with small matters: when M. Guizot walks the street, he seems to see nothing; the head is thrown back, the eye fixed, and the mouth working. His mind is no doubt at work, but it is not stirred

by what is external. Perhaps it is the internal activity of mind that overmasters the perceptive power. Anyhow there might have been an *émeute* in the street and he would not have known it; there have been revolutions in his life, and he is scarcely the wiser. Among the most frivolous and fickle of civilised nations he is alone. They pass from the game of war to the game of peace, from the game of science to the game of art, from the game of liberty to the game of slavery, from the game of slavery to the game of license; he stands like a schoolmaster in the playground, without sport and without pleasure, firm and sullen, slow and awful.

A man of this sort is a curious mental phenomenon. He appears to get early—perhaps to be born with—a kind of dry schedule or catalogue of the universe; he has a ledger in his head, and has a title to which he can refer any transaction; nothing puzzles him, nothing comes amiss to him, but he is not in the least the wiser for anything. Like the book-keeper, he has his heads of account, and he knows them, but he is no wiser for the particular items. After a busy day, and after a slow day, after a few entries, and after many, his knowledge is exactly the same: take his opinion of Baron Rothschild, he will say: "Yes, he keeps an account with us"; of Humphrey Brown: "Yes, we have that account, too". Just so with the class of minds which we are speaking of, and in greater matters. Very early in life they come to a certain and considerable acquaintance with the world; they learn very quickly all they can learn, and naturally they never, in any way, learn any more. Mr. Pitt is, in this country, the type of the character. Mr. Alison, in a well-known passage, makes it a matter of wonder that he was fit to be a Chancellor of the Exchequer at twenty-three, and it *is* a great wonder. But it is to be remembered that he was no more fit at forty-three. As somebody said, he did not grow, he was cast. Experience taught him nothing, and he did not believe that he had anything to learn. The habit of mind in smaller degrees is not very rare, and might be illustrated without end. Hazlitt tells a story of West, the painter, that is in point: When some one asked him if he had ever been to Greece, he answered: "No; I have read a

descriptive catalogue of the principal objects in that country, and I believe I am as well conversant with them as if I had visited it". No doubt he was just as well conversant, and so would be any *doctrinaire.*

But Shakespeare was not a man of this sort. If he walked down a street, he knew what was in that street. His mind did not form in early life a classified list of all the objects in the universe, and learn no more about the universe ever after. From a certain fine sensibility of nature, it is plain that he took a keen interest not only in the general and coarse outlines of objects, but in their minutest particulars and gentlest gradations. You may open Shakespeare and find the clearest proofs of this; take the following:—

"When last the young Orlando parted from you,
He left a promise to return again
Within an hour; and, pacing through the forest,
Chewing the food of sweet and bitter fancy,
Lo, what befel! he threw his eye aside,
And, mark, what object did present itself!
Under an oak, whose boughs were mossed with age,
And high top bald with dry antiquity,
A wretched ragged man, o'ergrown with hair,
Lay sleeping on his back: about his neck
A green and gilded snake had wreath'd itself,
Who with her head, nimble in threats, approach'd
The opening of his mouth; but suddenly
Seeing Orlando, it unlink'd itself,
And with indented glides did slip away
Into a bush: under which bush's shade
A lioness, with udders all drawn dry,
Lay crouching, head on ground, with cat-like watch,
When that the sleeping man should stir; for 'tis
The royal disposition of that beast,
To prey on nothing that doth seem as dead:
This seen," etc., etc.[1]

Or the more celebrated description of the hunt:—

"And when thou hast on foot the purblind hare,
Mark the poor wretch, to overshoot his troubles,
How he outruns the wind, and with what care

[1] "As You Like It," iv. 3.

He cranks and crosses, with a thousand doubles:
The many musets through the which he goes
Are like a labyrinth to amaze his foes.

"Sometime he runs among a flock of sheep,
To make the cunning hounds mistake their smell,
And sometime where earth-delving conies keep,
To stop the loud pursuers in their yell;
And sometimes sorteth with a herd of deer;
Danger deviseth shifts; wit waits on fear:

"For thee his smell with others being mingled,
The hot scent-snuffing hounds are driven to doubt,
Ceasing their clamorous cry, till they have singled,
With much ado, the cold fault cleanly out;
Then do they spend their mouths: Echo replies
As if another chase were in the skies.

"By this, poor Wat, far off, upon a hill,
Stands on his hinder legs with listening ear,
To harken if his foes pursue him still;
Anon their loud alarums he doth hear;
And now his grief may be compared well
To one sore sick that hears the passing bell.

"Then thou shalt see the dew-bedaddled wretch
Turn and return, indenting with the way;
Each envious briar his weary legs doth scratch,
Each shadow makes him stop, each murmur stay:
For misery is trodden on by many,
And being low, never relieved by any." [1]

It is absurd, by the way, to say we know *nothing* about the man who wrote that; we know that he had been after a hare. It is idle to allege that mere imagination would tell him that a hare is apt to run among a flock of sheep, or that its so doing disconcerts the scent of hounds. But no single citation really represents the power of the argument. Set descriptions may be manufactured to order, and it does not follow that even the most accurate or successful of them was really the result of a thorough and habitual knowledge of the object. A man who knows little of Nature may write one excellent delineation, as a poor man may have one bright guinea. Real opulence consists in having many. What

[1] "Venus and Adonis."

truly indicates excellent knowledge, is the habit of constant, sudden, and almost unconscious allusion, which implies familiarity, for it can arise from that alone,—and this very species of incidental, casual, and perpetual reference to "the mighty world of eye and ear," [1] is the particular characteristic of Shakespeare.

In this respect Shakespeare had the advantage of one whom, in many points, he much resembled—Sir Walter Scott. For a great poet, the organisation of the latter was very blunt; he had no sense of smell, little sense of taste, almost no ear for music (he knew a few, perhaps three, Scotch tunes, which he avowed that he had learnt in sixty years, by hard labour and mental association), and not much turn for the *minutiæ* of Nature in any way. The effect of this may be seen in some of the best descriptive passages of his poetry, and we will not deny that it does (although proceeding from a sensuous defect), in a certain degree, add to their popularity. He deals with the main outlines and great points of Nature, never attends to any others, and in this respect he suits the comprehension and knowledge of many who know only those essential and considerable outlines. Young people, especially, who like big things, are taken with Scott, and bored by Wordsworth, who knew too much. And after all, the two poets are in proper harmony, each with his own scenery. Of all beautiful scenery the Scotch is the roughest and barest, as the English is the most complex and cultivated. What a difference is there between the minute and finished delicacy of Rydal Water and the rough simplicity of Loch Katrine! It is the beauty of civilisation beside the beauty of barbarism. Scott has himself pointed out the effect of this on arts and artists.

> "Or see yon weather-beaten hind,
> Whose sluggish herds before him wind,
> Whose tattered plaid and rugged cheek
> His Northern clime and kindred speak;
> Through England's laughing meads he goes,
> And England's wealth around him flows;
> Ask if it would content him well,

[1] Wordsworth: "Tintern Abbey".

At ease in those gay plains to dwell,
Where hedgerows spread a verdant screen,
And spires and forests intervene,
And the neat cottage peeps between?
No, not for these would he exchange
His dark Lochaber's boundless range,
Not for fair Devon's meads forsake
Ben Nevis grey and Garry's lake.

"Thus while I ape the measures wild
Of tales that charmed me yet a child,
Rude though they be, still, with the chime,
Return the thoughts of early time;
And feelings roused in life's first day,
Glow in the line and prompt the lay.
Then rise those crags, that mountain tower,
Which charmed my fancy's wakening hour.
Though no broad river swept along,
To claim perchance heroic song;
Though sighed no groves in summer gale,
To prompt of love a softer tale;
Though scarce a puny streamlet's speed
Claimed homage from a shepherd's reed,
Yet was poetic impulse given
By the green hill and clear blue heaven.
It was a barren scene and wild,
Where naked cliffs were rudely piled,
But ever and anon between,
Lay velvet tufts of loveliest green;
And well the lonely infant knew
Recesses where the wallflower grew,
And honeysuckle loved to crawl
Up the low crag and ruined wall.

. . . . . .

"From me, thus nurtured, dost thou ask
The classic poet's well-conned task?
Nay, Erskine, nay—On the wild hill
Let the wild heathbell flourish still;
Cherish the tulip, prune the vine,
But freely let the woodbine twine,
And leave untrimmed the eglantine.
Nay, my friend, nay—Since oft thy praise
Hath given fresh vigour to my lays,
Since oft thy judgment could refine
My flattened thought or cumbrous line,

Still kind, as is thy wont, attend,
And in the minstrel spare the friend.
Though wild as cloud, as stream, as gale,
Flow forth, flow unrestrained, my tale." [1]

And this is wise, for there is beauty in the North as well as in the South. Only it is to be remembered that the beauty of the Trossachs is the result of but a few elements—say birch and brushwood, rough hills and narrow dells, much heather and many stones—while the beauty of England is one thing in one district and one in another; is here the combination of one set of qualities, and there the harmony of opposite ones, and is everywhere made up of many details and delicate refinements; all which require an exquisite delicacy of perceptive organisation, a seeing eye, a minutely hearing ear. Scott's is the strong admiration of a rough mind; Shakespeare's, the nice minuteness of a susceptible one.

A perfectly poetic appreciation of nature contains two elements, a knowledge of facts, and a sensibility to charms. Everybody who may have to speak to some naturalists will be well aware how widely the two may be separated. He will have seen that a man may study butterflies and forget that they are beautiful, or be perfect in the "Lunar theory" without knowing what most people mean by the moon. Generally such people prefer the stupid parts of nature—worms and Cochin-China fowls. But Shakespeare was not obtuse. The lines—

"Daffodils
That come before the swallow dares, and take
The winds of March with beauty; violets dim,
But sweeter than the lids of Juno's eyes,
Or Cytherea's breath." [2]

seem to show that he knew those feelings of youth, to which beauty is more than a religion.

In his mode of delineating natural objects Shakespeare is curiously opposed to Milton. The latter, who was still by temperament, and a schoolmaster by trade, selects a beautiful object, puts it straight out before him and his readers, and

[1] "Marmion," Introduction to canto iii.
[2] "A Winter's Tale," iv. 3.

accumulates upon it all the learned imagery of a thousand years; Shakespeare glances at it and says something of his own. It is not our intention to say that, as a describer of the external world, Milton is inferior; in *set* description we rather think that he is the better. We only wish to contrast the mode in which the delineation is effected. The one is like an artist who dashes off any number of picturesque sketches at any moment; the other like a man who has lived at Rome, has undergone a thorough training, and by deliberate and conscious effort, after a long study of the best masters, can produce a few great pictures. Milton, accordingly, as has been often remarked, is careful in the choice of his subjects; he knows too well the value of his labour to be very ready to squander it; Shakespeare, on the contrary, describes anything that comes to hand, for he is prepared for it whatever it may be, and what he paints he paints without effort. Compare any passage from Shakespeare—for example, those quoted before—and the following passage from Milton:—

> Southward through Eden went a river large,
> Nor changed its course, but through the shaggy hill
> Passed underneath ingulfed; for God had thrown
> That mountain as His garden mould, high raised
> Upon the rapid current, which through veins
> Of porous earth, with kindly thirst up-drawn,
> Rose a fresh fountain, and with many a rill
> Watered the garden; thence united fell
> Down the steep glade, and met the nether flood,
> Which from its darksome passage now appears
> And now divided into four main streams
> Runs diverse, wandering many a famous realm
> And country, whereof here needs no account;
> But rather to tell how,—if art could tell,—
> How from that sapphire fount the crispèd brooks,
> Rolling on orient pearl and sands of gold,
> With mazy error under pendent shades
> Ran nectar, visiting each plant; and fed
> Flowers worthy of Paradise, which not nice art
> In beds and curious knots, but Nature boon
> Poured forth profuse on hill, and dale, and plain,
> Both where the morning sun first warmly smote
> The open field, and where the unpierced shade

Imbrowned the noontide bowers. Thus was this place
A happy rural seat of various view;
Groves whose rich trees wept odorous gums and balm;
Others whose fruit, burnished with golden rind,
Hung amiable (Hesperian fables true,
If true, here only), and of delicious taste:
Betwixt them lawns, or level downs, and flocks
Grazing the tender herb, were interposed:
Or palmy hillock, or the flowery lap
Of some irriguous valley spread her store;
Flowers of all hue, and without thorn the rose." [1]

Why, you could draw a map of it. It is *not* "Nature boon," but "nice art in beds and curious knots"; it is exactly the old (and excellent) style of artificial gardening, by which any place can be turned into trim hedgerows, and stiff borders, and comfortable shades; but there are no straight lines in Nature or Shakespeare. Perhaps the contrast may be accounted for by the way in which the two poets acquired their knowledge of scenes and scenery. We think we demonstrated before that Shakespeare was a sportsman, but if there be still a sceptic or a dissentient, let him read the following remarks on dogs:—

"My hounds are bred out of the Spartan kind,
So flewed, so sanded; and their heads are hung
With ears that sweep away the morning dew,
Crook-kneed and dewlapped like Thessalian bulls;
Slow in pursuit, but matched in mouth like bells,
Each under each. A cry more tunable
Was never holloa'd to nor cheered with horn
In Crete, in Sparta, nor in Thessaly." [2]

"Judge when you hear." [3] It is evident that the man who wrote this was a judge of dogs, was an out-of-door sporting man, full of natural sensibility, not defective in "daintiness of ear," and above all things, apt to cast on Nature random, sportive, half-boyish glances, which reveal so much, and bequeath such abiding knowledge. Milton, on the contrary, went out to see Nature. He left a narrow cell, and the intense study which was his "portion in this life," to take a slow, careful, and reflective walk. In his

[1] *Paradise Lost*, book iv.
[2] "Midsummer Night's Dream," iv. 1. [3] *Ibid.*, next line.

treatise on education he has given us his notion of the way in which young people should be familiarised with natural objects. "But," he remarks, "to return to our institute; besides these constant exercises at home, there is another opportunity of gaining pleasure from pleasure itself abroad; in those vernal seasons of the year when the air is calm and pleasant, it were an injury and sullenness against Nature, not to go out and see her riches and partake in her rejoicing in heaven and earth. I should not therefore be a persuader to them of studying much in these, after two or three years, that they have well laid their grounds, but to ride out in companies, with prudent and staid guides, to all quarters of the land; learning and observing all places of strength, all commodities of building and of soil, for towns and tillage, harbours and ports of trade. Sometimes taking sea as far as our navy, to learn there also what they can in the practical knowledge of sailing and of sea-fight." Fancy "the prudent and staid guides". What a machinery for making pedants. Perhaps Shakespeare would have known that the conversation would be in this sort: "I say, Shallow, that mare is going in the knees. She has never been the same since you larked her over the fivebar, while Moleyes was talking clay and agriculture. I do not hate Latin so much, but I hate 'argillaceous earth'; and what use is *that* to a fellow in the Guards, *I* should like to know?" Shakespeare had himself this sort of boyish buoyancy. He was not "one of the staid guides". We might further illustrate it. Yet this would be tedious enough, and we prefer to go on and show what we mean by an experiencing nature in relation to men and women, just as we have striven to indicate what it is in relation to horses and hares.

The reason why so few good books are written, is that so few people that can write know anything. In general an author has always lived in a room, has read books, has cultivated science, is acquainted with the style and sentiments of the best authors, but he is out of the way of employing his own eyes and ears. He has nothing to hear and nothing to see. His life is a vacuum. The mental habits of Robert

Southey, which about a year ago were so extensively praised in the public journals, are the type of literary existence, just as the praise bestowed on them shows the admiration excited by them among literary people. He wrote poetry (as if anybody could) before breakfast; he read during breakfast He wrote history until dinner; he corrected proof-sheets between dinner and tea; he wrote an essay for the *Quarterly* afterwards; and after supper, by way of relaxation, composed the "Doctor"—a lengthy and elaborate jest. Now, what can any one think of such a life—except how clearly it shows that the habits best fitted for communicating information, formed with the best care, and daily regulated by the best motives, are exactly the habits which are likely to afford a man the least information to communicate. Southey had no events, no experiences. His wife kept house and allowed him pocket-money, just as if he had been a German professor devoted to accents, tobacco, and the dates of Horace's amours. And it is pitiable to think that so meritorious a life was only made endurable by a painful delusion. He thought that day by day, and hour by hour, he was accumulating stores for the instruction and entertainment of a long posterity. His epics were to be in the hands of all men, and his history of Brazil, the "Herodotus of the South American Republics". As if his epics were not already dead, and as if the people who now cheat at Valparaiso care a *real* who it was that cheated those before them. Yet it was only by a conviction like this that an industrious and caligraphic man (for such was Robert Southey), who might have earned money as a clerk, worked all his days for half a clerk's wages, at occupation much duller and more laborious. The critic in *The Vicar of Wakefield* lays down that you should *always* say that the picture would have been better if the painter had taken more pains; but in the case of the practised literary man, you should often enough say that the writings would have been much better if the writer had taken less pains. He says he has devoted his life to the subject—the reply is: "Then you have taken the best way to prevent your making anything of it". Instead of reading studiously what Burgersdicius and Æneæsidemus said men

were, you should have gone out yourself, and seen (if you can see) what they are.

After all, the original way of writing books may turn out to be the best. The first author, it is plain, could not have taken anything from books, since there were no books for him to copy from ; he looked at things for himself. Anyhow, the modern system fails, for where are the amusing books from voracious students and habitual writers? Not that we mean exactly to say that an author's hard reading is the cause of his writing that which is hard to read. This would be near the truth, but not quite the truth. The two are concomitant effects of a certain defective nature. Slow men read well, but write ill. The abstracted habit, the want of keen exterior interests, the aloofness of mind from what is next it, all tend to make a man feel an exciting curiosity and interest about remote literary events, the toil of scholastic logicians, and the petty feuds of Argos and Lacedæmon ; but they also tend to make a man very unable to explain and elucidate those exploits for the benefit of his fellows. What separates the author from his readers, will make it proportionably difficult for him to explain himself to them. Secluded habits do not tend to eloquence ; and the indifferent apathy which is so common in studious persons is exceedingly unfavourable to the liveliness of narration and illustration which is needed for excellence in even the simpler sorts of writing. Moreover, in general it will perhaps be found that persons devoted to mere literature commonly become devoted to mere idleness. They wish to produce a great work, but they find they cannot. Having relinquished everything to devote themselves to this, they conclude on trial that this is impossible. They wish to write, but nothing occurs to them. Therefore they write nothing, and they do nothing. As has been said, they have nothing to do. Their life has no events, unless they are very poor. With any decent means of subsistence, they have nothing to rouse them from an indolent and musing dream. A merchant must meet his bills, or he is civilly dead and uncivilly remembered. But a student may know nothing of time and

be too lazy to wind up his watch. In the retired citizen's journal in Addison's *Spectator*, we have the type of this way of spending the time: Mem. Morning 8 to 9, "Went into the parlour and tied on my shoe-buckles". This is the sort of life for which studious men commonly relinquish the pursuits of business and the society of their fellows.

Yet all literary men are not tedious, neither are they all slow. One great example even these most tedious times have luckily given us, to show us what may be done by a really great man even now, the same who before served as an illustration—Sir Walter Scott. In his lifetime people denied he was a poet, but nobody said that he was not "the best fellow" in Scotland—perhaps that was not much—or that he had not more wise joviality, more living talk, more graphic humour, than any man in Great Britain. "Wherever we went," said Mr. Wordsworth, "we found his name acted as an *open sesame*, and I believe that in the character of the *sheriff's* friends, we might have counted on a hearty welcome under any roof in the border country." Never neglect to talk to people with whom you are casually thrown, was his precept, and he exemplified the maxim himself. "I believe," observes his biographer, "that Scott has somewhere expressed in print his satisfaction, that amid all the changes of our manners, the ancient freedom of personal intercourse may still be indulged between a master and an *out-of-door* servant; but in truth he kept by the old fashion, even with domestic servants, to an extent which I have hardly ever seen practised by any other gentleman. He conversed with his coachman if he sat by him, as he often did, on the box—with his footman, if he chanced to be in the rumble. Indeed, he did not confine his humanity to his own people; any steady-going servant of a friend of his was soon considered as a sort of friend too, and was sure to have a kind little colloquy to himself at coming or going." "Sir Walter speaks to every man as if he was his blood relation," was the expressive comment of one of these dependants. It was in this way that he acquired the great knowledge of various kinds of men, which is so clear and conspicuous in his writings; nor could that knowledge have been

acquired on easier terms, or in any other way. No man could describe the character of Dandie Dinmont, without having been in Lidderdale. Whatever has been once in a book may be put into a book again; but an original character, taken at first hand from the sheepwalks and from Nature, must be seen in order to be known. A man, to be able to describe—indeed, to be able to know—various people in life, must be able at sight to comprehend their essential features, to know how they shade one into another, to see how they diversify the common uniformity of civilised life. Nor does this involve simply intellectual or even imaginative pre-requisites, still less will it be facilitated by exquisite senses or subtle fancy. What is wanted is, to be able to appreciate mere clay—which mere mind never will. If you will describe the people,—nay, if you will write for the people, you must be one of the people. You must have led their life, and must wish to lead their life. However strong in any poet may be the higher qualities of abstract thought or conceiving fancy, unless he can actually sympathise with those around him, he can never describe those around him. Any attempt to produce a likeness of what is not really *liked* by the person who is describing it, will end in the creation of what may be correct, but is not living—of what may be artistic, but is likewise artificial.

Perhaps this is the defect of the works of the greatest dramatic genius of recent times—Goethe. His works are too much in the nature of literary studies; the mind is often deeply impressed by them, but one doubts if the author was. He saw them as he saw the houses of Weimar and the plants in the act of metamorphosis. He had a clear perception of their fixed condition and their successive transitions, but he did not really (if we may so speak) comprehend their motive power. So to say, he appreciated their life, but not their liveliness. Niebuhr, as is well known, compared the most elaborate of Goethe's works—the novel *Wilhelm Meister*—to a menagerie of tame animals, meaning thereby, as we believe, to express much the same distinction. He felt that there was a deficiency in mere vigour and rude energy. We have a long train and no engine—a great accumulation of excellent matter, arranged

and ordered with masterly skill, but not animated with over-buoyant and unbounded play. And we trace this not to a defect in imaginative power, a defect which it would be a simple absurdity to impute to Goethe, but to the tone of his character and the habits of his mind. He moved hither and thither through life, but he was always a man apart. He mixed with unnumbered kinds of men, with courts and academies, students and women, camps and artists, but everywhere he was with them, yet not of them. In every scene he was there, and he made it clear that he was there with a reserve and as a stranger. He went there *to experience.* As a man of universal culture and well skilled in the order and classification of human life, the fact of any one class or order being beyond his reach or comprehension seemed an absurdity, and it was an absurdity. He thought that he was equal to moving in any description of society, and he was equal to it; but then on that exact account he was absorbed in none. There were none of surpassing and immeasurably preponderating captivation. No scene and no subject were to him what Scotland and Scotch nature were to Sir Walter Scott. "If I did not see the heather once a year, I should die," said the latter; but Goethe would have lived without it, and it would not have cost him much trouble. In every one of Scott's novels there is always the spirit of the old moss-trooper—the flavour of the ancient border; there is the intense sympathy which enters into the most living moments of the most living characters—the lively energy which *becomes* the energy of the most vigorous persons delineated. "Marmion" was "written" while he was galloping on horseback. It reads as if it were so.

Now it appears that Shakespeare not only had that various commerce with, and experience of men, which was common both to Goethe and to Scott, but also that he agrees with the latter rather than with the former in the kind and species of that experience. He was not merely with men, but of men; he was not a "thing apart,"[1] with a clear intuition of what was in those around him; he had in his own nature the germs and tendencies of the very elements that he described. He knew

[1] Byron: "Don Juan," i., cxciv.

what was in man, for he felt it in himself. Throughout all his writings you see an amazing sympathy with common people, rather an excessive tendency to dwell on the common features of ordinary lives. You feel that common people could have been cut out of him, but not without his feeling it; for it would have deprived him of a very favourite subject—of a portion of his ideas to which he habitually recurred.

"*Leon.* What would you with me, honest neighbour?

Dog. Marry, sir, I would have some confidence with you, that discerns you nearly.

Leon. Brief, I pray you; for you see 'tis a busy time with me.

Dog. Marry, this it is, sir.

Verg. Yes, in truth it is, sir.

Leon. What is it, my good friends?

Dog. Goodman Verges, sir, speaks a little off the matter: an old man, sir, and his wits are not so blunt, as, God help, I would desire they were; but, in faith, honest as the skin between his brows.

Verg. Yes, I thank God, I am as honest as any man living, that is an old man, and no honester than I.

Dog. Comparisons are odorous:—*palabras*, neighbour Verges.

Leon. Neighbours, you are tedious.

Dog. It pleases your worship to say so, but we are the poor duke's officers; but, truly, for mine own part, if I were as tedious as a king, I could find in my heart to bestow it all of your worship.

. . . . . .

Leon. I would fain know what you have to say.

Verg. Marry, sir, our watch to-night, excepting your worship's presence, have ta'en a couple of as arrant knaves as any in Messina.

Dog. A good old man, sir; he will be talking; as they say, When the age is in, the wit is out; God help us! it is a world to see!—Well said, i' faith, neighbour Verges:—well, God's a good man; an two men ride of a horse, one must ride behind:—An honest soul, i' faith, sir; by my troth he is, as ever broke bread; but God is to be worshipped: All men are not alike; alas, good neighbour!

Leon. Indeed, neighbour, he comes too far short of you.

Dog. Gifts that God gives,"—etc., etc. [1]

"*Stafford.* Ay, sir.

Cade. By her he had two children at one birth.

Staff. That's false.

Cade. Ay, there's the question; but, I say, 'tis true:

[1] "Much Ado about Nothing," iii. 5.

> The elder of them, being put to nurse,
> Was by a beggar-woman stol'n away :
> And, ignorant of his birth and parentage,
> Became a bricklayer, when he came to age ;
> His son am I ; deny it, if you can.
>
> *Dick.* Nay, 'tis too true ; therefore he shall be king.
> *Smith.* Sir, he made a chimney in my father's house, and the bricks are alive at this day to testify it ; therefore, deny it not." [1]

Shakespeare was too wise not to know that for most of the purposes of human life stupidity is a most valuable element. He had nothing of the impatience which sharp logical narrow minds habitually feel when they come across those who do not apprehend their quick and precise deductions. No doubt he talked to the stupid players, to the stupid doorkeeper, to the property man, who considers paste jewels "very preferable, besides the expense"—talked with the stupid apprentices of stupid Fleet Street, and had much pleasure in ascertaining what was their notion of "King Lear". In his comprehensive mind it was enough if every man hitched well into his own place in human life. If every one were logical and literary, how would there be scavengers, or watchmen, or caulkers, or coopers? Narrow minds will be "subdued to what" they "work in". The "dyer's hand" [2] will not more clearly carry off its tint, nor will what is moulded more precisely indicate the confines of the mould. A patient sympathy, a kindly fellow-feeling for the narrow intelligence necessarily induced by narrow circumstances—a narrowness which, in some degrees, seems to be inevitable, and is perhaps more serviceable than most things to the wise conduct of life—this, though quick and half-bred minds may despise it, seems to be a necessary constituent in the composition of manifold genius. "How shall the world be served?" asks the host in Chaucer. We must have cart-horses as well as race-horses, draymen as well as poets. It is no bad thing, after all, to be a slow man and to have one idea a year. You don't make a figure, perhaps, in argumentative society, which requires a quicker species of thought, but is that the worse?

[1] "2 King Henry VI.," iv. 2. [2] Shakespeare ; "Sonnet," cxi.

"*Hol. Via*, Goodman Dull; thou hast spoken no word all this while.

Dull. Nor understood none either, sir.

Hol. Allons, we will employ thee.

Dull. I'll make one in a dance or so, or I will play on the tabor to the worthies, and let them dance the hay.

Hol. Most dull, honest Dull, to our sport away." [1]

And such, we believe, was the notion of Shakespeare.

S. T. Coleridge has a nice criticism which bears on this point. He observes that in the narrations of uneducated people in Shakespeare, just as in real life, there is a want of prospectiveness and a superfluous amount of regressiveness. People of this sort are unable to look a long way in front of them, and they wander from the right path. They get on too fast with one half, and then the other hopelessly lags. They can tell a story exactly as it is told to them (as an animal can go step by step where it has been before), but they can't calculate its bearings beforehand, or see how it is to be adapted to those to whom they are speaking, nor do they know how much they have thoroughly told and how much they have not. "I went up the street, then I went down the street; no, first went down and then—but you do not follow me; I go before you, sir." Thence arises the complex style usually adopted by persons not used to narration. They tumble into a story and get on as they can. This is scarcely the sort of thing which a man could foresee. Of course a metaphysician can account for it, and, like Coleridge, assure you that if he had not observed it, he could have predicted it in a moment; but, nevertheless, it is too refined a conclusion to be made out from known premises by common reasoning. Doubtless there is some reason why negroes have woolly hair (and if you look into a philosophical treatise, you will find that the author could have made out that it would be so, if he had not, by a mysterious misfortune, known from infancy that it was the fact),—still one could never have supposed it oneself. And in the same manner, though the profounder critics may explain in a satisfactory and refined manner, how the confused and undulating style

[1] "Love's Labour's Lost," v. 1.

of narration is peculiarly incident to the mere multitude, yet it is most likely that Shakespeare derived his acquaintance with it from the fact, from actual hearing, and not from what may be the surer, but is the slower, process of metaphysical deduction. The best passage to illustrate this is that in which the nurse gives a statement of Juliet's age; but it will not exactly suit our pages. The following of Mrs. Quickly will suffice:—

"Tilly-fally, Sir John, never tell me; your ancient swaggerer comes not in my doors. I was before Master Tizzick, the Deputy, the other day; and, as he said to me,—it was no longer ago than Wednesday last,—Neighbour Quickly, says he;—Master Dumb, our minister, was by then;—Neighbour Quickly, says he, receive those that are civil; for, saith he, you are in an ill name:—now, he said so, I can tell you whereupon; for, says he, you are an honest woman, and well thought on; therefore take heed to what guests you receive: Receive, says he, no swaggering companions.—There comes none here;—you would bless you to hear what he said:—no, I'll no swaggerers."[1]

Now, it is quite impossible that this, any more than the political reasoning on the parentage of Cade, which was cited before, should have been written by one not habitually and sympathisingly conversant with the talk of the illogical classes. Shakespeare felt, if we may say so, the force of the bad reasoning. He did not, like a sharp logician, angrily detect a flaw, and set it down as a fallacy of reference or a fallacy of amphibology. This is not the English way, though Dr. Whately's logic has been published so long (and, as he says himself, must now be deemed to be irrefutable, since no one has ever offered any refutation of it). Yet still people in this country do not like to be committed to distinct premises. They like a Chancellor of the Exchequer to say: "It has during very many years been maintained by the honourable member for Montrose that two and two make four, and I am free to say, that I think there is a great deal to be said in favour of that opinion; but, without committing her Majesty's Government to that proposition as an abstract sentiment, I will go so far as to assume two and two are not sufficient to make five, which with

[1] "2 King Henry VI.," ii. 4.

the permission of the House, will be a sufficient basis for all the operations which I propose to enter upon during the present year". We have no doubt Shakespeare reasoned in that way himself. Like any other Englishman, when he had a clear course before him, he rather liked to shuffle over little hitches in the argument, and on that account he had a great sympathy with those who did so too. He would never have interrupted Mrs. Quickly; he saw that her mind was going to and fro over the subject; he saw that it was coming right, and this was enough for him, and will be also enough of this topic for our readers.

We think we have proved that Shakespeare had an enormous specific acquaintance with the common people; that this can only be obtained by sympathy. It likewise has a further condition.

In spiritedness, the style of Shakespeare is very like to that of Scott. The description of a charge of cavalry in Scott reads, as was said before, as if it was written on horseback. A play by Shakespeare reads as if it were written in a playhouse. The great critics assure you that a theatrical audience must be kept awake, but Shakespeare knew this of his own knowledge. When you read him, you feel a sensation of motion, a conviction that there is something "up," a notion that not only is something being talked about, but also that something is being done. We do not imagine that Shakespeare owed this quality to his being a player, but rather that he became a player because he possessed this quality of mind. For after, and notwithstanding, everything which has been, or may be, said against the theatrical profession, it certainly does require from those who pursue it a certain quickness and liveliness of mind. Mimics are commonly an elastic sort of persons, and it takes a little levity of disposition to enact even the "heavy fathers". If a boy joins a company of strolling players, you may be sure that he is not a "good boy"; he may be a trifle foolish, or a thought romantic, but certainly he is not slow. And this was in truth the case with Shakespeare. They say, too, that in the beginning he was a first-rate link-boy; and the tradition is affecting, though we fear it is not

quite certain. Anyhow, you feel about Shakespeare that he could have been a link-boy. In the same way you feel he may have been a player. You are sure at once that he could not have followed any sedentary kind of life. But wheresoever there was anything *acted* in earnest or in jest, by way of mock representation or by way of serious reality, there he found matter for his mind. If anybody could have any doubt about the liveliness of Shakespeare, let them consider the character of Falstaff. When a man has created *that* without a capacity for laughter, then a blind man may succeed in describing colours. Intense animal spirits are the single sentiment (if they be a sentiment) of the entire character. If most men were to save up all the gaiety of their whole lives, it would come about to the gaiety of one speech in Falstaff. A morose man might have amassed many jokes, might have observed many details of jovial society, might have conceived a Sir John, marked by rotundity of body, but could hardly have imagined what we call his rotundity of mind. We mean that the animal spirits of Falstaff give him an easy, vague, diffusive sagacity which is peculiar to him. A morose man, Iago, for example, may know anything, and is apt to know a good deal; but what he knows is generally all in corners. He knows number 1, number 2, number 3, and so on, but there is not anything continuous, or smooth, or fluent in his knowledge. Persons conversant with the works of Hazlitt will know in a minute what we mean. Everything which he observed he seemed to observe from a certain soreness of mind; he looked at people because they offended him; he had the same vivid notion of them that a man has of objects which grate on a wound in his body. But there is nothing at all of this in Falstaff; on the contrary, everything pleases him, and everything is food for a joke. Cheerfulness and prosperity give an easy abounding sagacity of mind which nothing else does give. Prosperous people bound easily over all the surface of things which their lives present to them; very likely they keep to the surface; there are things beneath or above to which they may not penetrate or attain, but what is on any part of the surface, that they know well. "Lift not the painted veil

which those who live call life,"[1] and they do not lift it. What is sublime or awful above, what is "sightless and drear"[2] beneath,—these they may not dream of. Nor is any one piece or corner of life so well impressed on them as on minds less happily constituted. It is only people who have had a tooth out, that really know the dentist's waiting-room. Yet such people, for the time at least, know nothing but that and their tooth. The easy and sympathising friend who accompanies them knows everything; hints gently at the contents of the *Times*, and would cheer you with Lord Palmerston's replies. So, on a greater scale, the man of painful experience knows but too well what has hurt him, and where and why; but the happy have a vague and rounded view of the round world, and such was the knowledge of Falstaff.

It is to be observed that these high spirits are not a mere excrescence or superficial point in an experiencing nature; on the contrary, they seem to be essential, if not to its idea or existence, at least to its exercise and employment. How are you to know people without talking to them, but how are you to talk to them without tiring yourself? A common man is exhausted in half an hour; Scott or Shakespeare could have gone on for a whole day. This is, perhaps, peculiarly necessary for a painter of English life. The basis of our national character seems to be a certain energetic humour, which may be found in full vigour in old Chaucer's time, and in great perfection in at least one of the popular writers of this age, and which is, perhaps, most easily described by the name of our greatest painter—Hogarth. It is amusing to see how entirely the efforts of critics and artists fail to naturalise in England any other sort of painting. Their efforts are fruitless; for the people painted are not English people: they may be Italians, or Greeks, or Jews, but it is quite certain that they are foreigners. We should not fancy that modern art ought to resemble the mediæval. So long as artists attempt the same class of paintings as Raphael, they will not only be inferior to Raphael, but they will never please, as they might please, the English people. What we want is what Hogarth

[1] Shelley: "Sonnet" (1818). [2] *Ibid.*

gave us—a representation of ourselves. It may be that we are wrong, that we ought to prefer something of the old world, some scene in Rome or Athens, some tale from Carmel or Jerusalem; but, after all, we do not. These places are, we think, abroad, and had their greatness in former times; we wish a copy of what now exists, and of what we have seen. London we know, and Manchester we know, but where are all these? It is the same with literature, Milton excepted, and even Milton can hardly be called a popular writer; all great English writers describe English people, and in describing them, they give, as they must give, a large comic element; and, speaking generally, this is scarcely possible, except in the case of cheerful and easy-living men. There is, no doubt, a biting satire, like that of Swift, which has for its essence misanthropy. There is the mockery of Voltaire, which is based on intellectual contempt; but this is not our English humour—it is not that of Shakespeare and Falstaff; ours is the humour of a man who laughs when he speaks, of flowing enjoyment, of an experiencing nature.

Yet it would be a great error if we gave anything like an exclusive prominence to this aspect of Shakespeare. Thus he appeared to those around him—in some degrees they knew that he was a cheerful, and humorous, and happy man; but of his higher gift they knew less than we. A great painter of men must (as has been said) have a faculty of conversing, but he must also have a capacity for solitude. There is much of mankind that a man can only learn from himself. Behind every man's external life, which he leads in company, there is another which he leads alone, and which he carries with him apart. We see but one aspect of our neighbour, as we see but one side of the moon; in either case there is also a dark half, which is unknown to us. We all come down to dinner, but each has a room to himself. And if we would study the internal lives of others, it seems essential that we should begin with our own. If we study this our *datum*, if we attain to see and feel how this influences and evolves itself in our social and (so to say) public life, then it is possible that we may find in the lives of others the same or analogous features; and if we

do not, then at least we may suspect that those who want them are deficient likewise in the secret agencies which we feel produce them in ourselves. The metaphysicians assert that people originally picked up the idea of the existence of other people in this way. It is orthodox doctrine that a baby says: "I have a mouth, mamma has a mouth: therefore I'm the same species as mamma. I have a nose, papa has a nose: therefore papa is the same genus as me." But whether or not this ingenious idea really does or does not represent the actual process by which we originally obtain an acquaintance with the existence of minds analogous to our own, it gives unquestionably the process by which we obtain our notion of that part of those minds which they never exhibit consciously to others, and which only becomes predominant in secrecy and solitude and to themselves. Now, that Shakespeare has this insight into the musing life of man, as well as into his social life, is easy to prove; take, for instance, the following passages:—

"This battle fares like to the morning's war,
When dying clouds contend with growing light;
What time the shepherd, blowing of his nails,
Can neither call it perfect day nor night.
Now sways it this way, like a mighty sea,
Forc'd by the tide to combat with the wind;
Now sways it that way, like the self-same sea
Forc'd to retire by fury of the wind:
Sometime, the flood prevails; and then, the wind:
Now, one the better; then, another best;
Both tugging to be victors, breast to breast,
Yet neither conqueror, nor conquered;
So is the equal poise of this fell war.
Here on this molehill will I sit me down.
To whom God will, there be the victory!
For Margaret my queen, and Clifford too,
Have chid me from the battle; swearing both
They prosper best of all when I am thence.
Would I were dead! if God's good will were so;
For what is in this world but grief and woe?
Oh God! methinks it were a happy life,
To be no better than a homely swain:
To sit upon a hill, as I do now,

To carve out dials quaintly, point by point,
Thereby to see the minutes how they run :
How many make the hour full complete,
How many hours bring about the day,
How many days will finish up the year,
How many years a mortal man may live.
When this is known, then to divide the time :
So many hours must I tend my flock ;
So many hours must I take my rest ;
So many hours must I contemplate ;
So many hours must I sport myself ;
So many days my ewes have been with young ;
So many weeks ere the poor fools will yean ;
So many years ere I shall shear the fleece ;
So minutes, hours, days, weeks, months, and years,
Pass'd over to the end they were created,
Would bring white hairs unto a quiet grave.
Ah, what a life were this ! how sweet ! how lovely !
Gives not the hawthorn bush a sweeter shade
To shepherds, looking on their silly sheep
Than doth a rich embroider'd canopy
To kings, that fear their subjects' treachery ?
O yes, it doth ; a thousand-fold it doth.
And to conclude,—the shepherd's homely curds,
His cold thin drink out of his leather bottle,
His wonted sleep under a fresh tree's shade,
All which secure and sweetly he enjoys,
If far beyond a prince's delicates,
His viands sparkling in a golden cup,
His body couchèd in a curious bed,
When care, mistrust, and treason wait on him."[1]

"A fool, a fool !—I met a fool i' the forest,
A motley fool !—a miserable world ;—
As I do live by food, I met a fool ;
Who laid him down and basked him in the sun,
And railed on lady Fortune in good terms,
In good set terms,—and yet a motley fool.
'Good-morrow, fool,' quoth I : 'No, sir,' quoth he,
'Call me not fool, till heaven hath sent me fortune :'
And then he drew a dial from his poke,
And looking on it with lack-lustre eye,
Says, very wisely, 'It is ten o'clock :
Thus may we see,' quoth he, 'how the world wags ;

[1] "3 King Henry VI.," ii. 5.

'Tis but an hour ago since it was nine ;
And after an hour more, 'twill be eleven ;
And so, from hour to hour, we ripe and ripe,
And then, from hour to hour, we rot and rot,
And thereby hangs a tale.' When I did hear
The motley fool thus moral on the time,
My lungs began to crow like chanticleer,
That fools should be so deep-contemplative ;
And I did laugh, sans intermission,
An hour by his dial." [1]

No slight versatility of mind and pliancy of fancy could pass at will from scenes such as these to the ward of Eastcheap and the society which heard the chimes at midnight. One of the reasons of the rarity of great imaginative works is that in very few cases is this capacity for musing solitude combined with that of observing mankind. A certain constitutional though latent melancholy is essential to such a nature. This is the exceptional characteristic in Shakespeare. All through his works you feel you are reading the popular author, the successful man ; but through them all there is a certain tinge of musing sadness pervading, and, as it were, softening their gaiety. Not a trace can be found of " eating cares " or narrow and mind-contracting toil, but everywhere there is, in addition to shrewd sagacity and buoyant wisdom, a refining element of chastening sensibility, which prevents sagacity from being rough, and shrewdness from becoming cold. He had an eye for either sort of life :—

" Why, let the stricken deer go weep,
The hart ungallèd play ;
For some must watch, and some must sleep,
Thus runs the world away ".[2]

In another point also Shakespeare, as he was, must be carefully contrasted with the estimate that would be formed of him from such delineations as that of Falstaff, and that was doubtless frequently made by casual, though only by casual, frequenters of the Mermaid. It has been said that the mind of Shakespeare contained within it the mind of Scott ; it remains to be observed that it contained also the mind of Keats.

[1] " As You Like It," ii. 7. [2] " Hamlet," iii. 2.

For, beside the delineation of human life, and beside also the delineation of Nature, there remains also for the poet a third subject—the delineation of *fancies*. Of course these, be they what they may, are like to, and were originally borrowed from, either man or Nature—from one or from both together. We know but two things in the simple way of direct experience, and whatever else we know must be in some mode or manner compacted out of them. Yet "books are a substantial world, both pure and good," and so are fancies too. In all countries, men have devised to themselves a whole series of half-divine creations—mythologies Greek and Roman, fairies, angels, beings who may be, for aught we know, but with whom, in the meantime, we can attain to no conversation. The most known of these mythologies are the Greek, and what is, we suppose, the second epoch of the Gothic, the fairies; and it so happens that Shakespeare has dealt with them both, and in a remarkable manner. We are not, indeed, of those critics who profess simple and unqualified admiration for the poem of "Venus and Adonis". It seems intrinsically, as we know it from external testimony to have been, a juvenile production, written when Shakespeare's nature might be well expected to be crude and unripened. Power is shown, and power of a remarkable kind; but it is not displayed in a manner that will please or does please the mass of men. In spite of the name of its author, the poem has never been popular—and surely this is sufficient. Nevertheless, it is remarkable as a literary exercise, and as a treatment of a singular, though unpleasant subject. The fanciful class of poems differ from others in being laid, so far as their scene goes, in a perfectly unseen world. The type of such productions is Keats's "Endymion". We mean that it is the type, not as giving the abstract perfection of this sort of art, but because it shows and embodies both its excellences and defects in a very marked and prominent manner. In that poem there are no passions and no actions, there is no art and no life; but there is beauty, and that is meant to be enough, and to a reader of one and twenty it is enough and more. What are exploits or speeches? what is Cæsar or Coriolanus? what is a tragedy like "Lear," or a real view of

human life in any kind whatever, to people who do not know and do not care what human life is? In early youth it is, perhaps, not true that the passions, taken generally, are particularly violent, or that the imagination is in any remarkable degree powerful; but it is certain that the fancy (which though it be, in the last resort, but a weak stroke of that same faculty, which, when it strikes hard, we call imagination, may yet for this purpose be looked on as distinct) is particularly wakeful, and that the gentler species of passions are more absurd than they are afterwards. And the literature of this period of human life runs naturally away from the real world; away from the less ideal portion of it, from stocks and stones, and aunts and uncles, and rests on mere half-embodied sentiments, which in the hands of great poets assume a kind of semi-personality, and are, to the distinction between things and persons, "as moonlight unto sunlight, and as water unto wine".[1] The Sonnets of Shakespeare belong exactly to the same school of poetry. They are not the sort of verses to take any particular hold upon the mind permanently and for ever, but at a certain period they take too much. For a young man to read in the spring of the year among green fields and in gentle air, they are the ideal. As First of April poetry they are perfect.

The "Midsummer Night's Dream" is of another order. If the question were to be decided by "Venus and Adonis," in spite of the unmeasured panegyrics of many writers, we should be obliged in equity to hold, that as a poet of mere fancy Shakespeare was much inferior to the late Mr. Keats and even to meaner men. Moreover, we should have been prepared with some refined reasonings to show that it was unlikely that a poet with so much hold on reality, in life and Nature, both in solitude and in society, should have also a similar command over *un*reality: should possess a command not only of flesh and blood, but of the imaginary entities which the self-inworking fancy brings forth—impalpable conceptions of mere mind: *quædam simulacra miris pallentia modis*,[2] thin ideas, which come we know not whence, and are given us we know not

[1] Tennyson: "Locksley Hall". [2] Lucretius, i. 24.

why. But, unfortunately for this ingenious, if not profound suggestion, Shakespeare, in fact, possessed the very faculty which it tends to prove that he would not possess. He could paint Poins and Falstaff, but he excelled also in fairy legends. He had such

> "Seething brains ;
> Such shaping fantasies as apprehend
> More than cool reason ever comprehends".[1]

As, for example, the idea of Puck, or Queen Mab, of Ariel, or such a passage as the following :—

> "*Puck.* How now, spirit ! whither wander you ?
> *Fai.* Over hill, over dale,
> Thorough bush, thorough briar,
> Over park, over pale,
> Thorough flood, thorough fire,
> I do wander everywhere,
> Swifter than the moones sphere ;
> And I serve the fairy queen,
> To dew her orbs upon the green :
> The cowslips tall her pensioners be
> In their gold coats spots you see ;
> Those be rubies, fairy favours,
> In those freckles live their savours :
> I must go seek some dew-drops here,
> And hang a pearl in every cowslip's ear.
> Farewell, thou lob of spirits, I'll be gone ;
> Our queen and all our elves come here anon.
> *Puck.* The king doth keep his revels here to-night ;
> Take heed the queen come not within his sight.
> For Oberon is passing fell and wrath,
> Because that she, as her attendant, hath
> A lovely boy, stolen from an Indian king ;
> She never had so sweet a changeling :
> And jealous Oberon would have the child
> Knight of his train, to trace the forests wild :
> But she, perforce, withholds the lovèd boy,
> Crowns him with flowers, and makes him all her joy :
> And now they never meet in grove, or green,
> By fountain clear, or spangled star-light sheen
> But they do square ; that all their elves, for fear,
> Creep into acorn-cups, and hide them there.
> *Fai.* Either I mistake your shape and making quite,

[1] "Midsummer Night's Dream," v. 1.

Or else you are that shrewd and knavish sprite
Call'd Robin Good-fellow: are you not he
That fright the maidens of the villagery;
Skim milk; and sometimes labour in the quern,
And bootless make the breathless housewife churn;
And sometimes make the drink to bear no barm;
Mislead night-wanderers, laughing at their harm?
Those that Hobgoblin call you, and sweet Puck,
You do their work, and they shall have good luck:
Are not you he?

Puck. Thou speak'st aright;
I am that merry wanderer of the night.
I jest to Oberon, and make him smile,
When I a fat and bean-fed horse beguile,
Neighing in likeness of a filly foal:
And sometimes lurk I in a gossip's bowl,
In very likeness of a roasted crab;
And, when she drinks, against her lips I bob,
And on her wither'd dew-lap pour the ale.
The wisest aunt, telling the saddest tale,
Sometime for three-foot stool mistaketh me;
Then slip I from beneath, down topples she,
And *tailor* cries, and falls into a cough;
And then the whole quire hold their hips, and loffe;
And waxen in their mirth, and neeze and swear
A merrier hour was never wasted there.—
But room, Fairy, here comes Oberon.

Fai. And here my mistress:—Would that he were gone!"[1]

Probably he believed in these things. Why not? Everybody else believed in them then. They suit our climate. As the Greek mythology suits the keen Attic sky, the fairies, indistinct and half-defined, suit a land of wild mists and gentle airs. They confuse the "maidens of the villagery"; they are the paganism of the South of England.

Can it be made out what were Shakespeare's political views? We think it certainly can, and that without difficulty. From the English historical plays, it distinctly appears that he accepted, like everybody then, the Constitution of his country. His lot was not cast in an age of political controversy, nor of reform. What was, was from of old. The Wars of the Roses had made it very evident how much room there was for the

[1] "Midsummer Night's Dream," ii. 1.

evils incident to an hereditary monarchy, for instance, those of a controverted succession, and the evils incident to an aristocracy, as want of public spirit and audacious selfishness, to arise and continue within the realm of England. Yet they had not repelled, and had barely disconcerted, our conservative ancestors. They had not become Jacobins; they did not concur—and history, except in Shakespeare, hardly does justice to them—in Jack Cade's notion that the laws should come out of his mouth, or that the commonwealth was to be reformed by interlocutors in this scene.

"*Geo.* I tell thee, Jack Cade the clothier means to dress the Commonwealth, and turn it, and set a new nap on it.

John. So he had need, for 'tis threadbare. Well, I say it was never a merry world in England since gentlemen came up.

Geo. O miserable age! Virtue is not regarded in handycraftsmen.

John. The nobility think scorn to go in leather aprons.

Geo. Nay more: the king's council are no good workmen.

John. True; and yet it is said, Labour in thy vocation; which is as much as to say, as let the magistrates be labouring men, and therefore should we be magistrates.

Geo. Thou hast hit it, for there is no better sign of a brave mind than a hard hand.

John. I see them! I see them!"[1]

The English people did see them, and know them, and therefore have rejected them. An audience which, *bonâ fide*, entered into the merit of this scene, would never believe in everybody's suffrage. They would know that there is such a thing as nonsense, and when a man has once attained to that deep conception, you may be sure of him ever after. And though it would be absurd to say that Shakespeare originated this idea, or that the disbelief in simple democracy is owing to his teaching or suggestions, yet it may, nevertheless, be truly said, that he shared in the peculiar knowledge of men—and also possessed the peculiar constitution of mind—which engenders this effect. The author of "Coriolanus" never believed in a mob, and did something towards preventing anybody else from doing so. But this political idea was not exactly the strongest in Shakespeare's mind. We think he had two other stronger,

[1] "2 King Henry VI.," iv. 2.

or as strong. First, the feeling of loyalty to the ancient polity of this country—not because it was good, but because it existed. In his time, people no more thought of the origin of the monarchy than they did of the origin of the Mendip Hills. The one had always been there, and so had the other. God (such was the common notion) had made both, and one as much as the other. Everywhere, in that age, the common modes of political speech assumed the existence of certain utterly national institutions, and would have been worthless and nonsensical except on that assumption. This national habit appears as it ought to appear in our national dramatist. A great divine tells us that the Thirty-nine Articles are "forms of thought"; inevitable conditions of the religious understanding: in politics, "kings, lords, and commons" are, no doubt, "forms of thought," to the great majority of Englishmen; in these they live, and beyond these they never move. You can't reason on the removal (such is the notion) of the English Channel, nor St. George's Channel, nor can you of the English Constitution, in like manner. It is to most of us, and to the happiest of us, a thing immutable, and such, no doubt, it was to Shakespeare, which, if any one would have proved, let him refer at random to any page of the historical English plays.

The second peculiar tenet which we ascribe to his political creed, is a disbelief in the middle classes. We fear he had no opinion of traders. In this age, we know, it is held that the keeping of a shop is equivalent to a political education. Occasionally, in country villages, where the trader sells everything, he is thought to know nothing, and has no vote; but in a town where he is a householder (as, indeed, he is in the country), and sells only one thing—there we assume that he knows everything. And this assumption is, in the opinion of some observers, confirmed by the fact. Sir Walter Scott used to relate, that when, after a trip to London, he returned to Tweedside, he always found the people in that district knew more of politics than the Cabinet. And so it is with the mercantile community in modern times. If you are a Chancellor of the Exchequer, it is possible that you may be acquainted with finance; but if you sell figs it is certain that you will. Now

we nowhere find this laid down in Shakespeare. On the contrary, you will generally find that when a "citizen" is mentioned, he generally does or says something absurd. Shakespeare had a clear perception that it is possible to bribe a class as well as an individual, and that personal obscurity is but an insecure guarantee for political disinterestedness.

> "Moreover, he hath left you all his walks,
> His private arbours and new-planted orchards
> On this side Tiber; he hath left them you,
> And to your heirs for ever: common pleasures,
> To walk abroad and recreate yourselves.
> Here was a Cæsar! when comes such another?"[1]

He everywhere speaks in praise of a tempered and ordered and qualified polity, in which the pecuniary classes have a certain influence, but no more, and shows in every page a keen sensibility to the large views and high-souled energies, the gentle refinements and disinterested desires, in which those classes are likely to be especially deficient. He is particularly the poet of personal nobility, though, throughout his writings, there is a sense of freedom, just as Milton is the poet of freedom, though with an underlying reference to personal nobility; indeed, we might well expect our two poets to combine the appreciation of a rude and generous liberty with that of a delicate and refined nobleness, since it is the union of these two elements that characterises our society and their experience.

There are two things—good-tempered sense and ill-tempered sense. In our remarks on the character of Falstaff, we hope we have made it very clear that Shakespeare had the former; we think it nearly as certain that he possessed the latter also. An instance of this might be taken from that contempt for the perspicacity of the *bourgeoisie* which we have just been mentioning. It is within the limits of what may be called malevolent sense, to take extreme and habitual pleasure in remarking the foolish opinions, the narrow notions, and fallacious deductions which seem to cling to the pompous and prosperous man of business. Ask him his opinion of the currency question, and he puts "bills" and "bullion" together in

[1] "Julius Cæsar," iii. 2.

a sentence, and he does not seem to care what he puts between them. But a more proper instance of (what has an odd sound), the malevolence of Shakespeare is to be found in the play of "Measure for Measure". We agree with Hazlitt, that this play seems to be written, perhaps more than any other, *con amore*, and with a relish; and this seems to be the reason why, notwithstanding the unpleasant nature of its plot, and the absence of any very attractive character, it is yet one of the plays which take hold on the mind most easily and most powerfully. Now the entire character of Angelo, which is the expressive feature of the piece, is nothing but a successful embodiment of the pleasure, the malevolent pleasure, which a warm-blooded and expansive man takes in watching the rare, the dangerous and inanimate excesses of the constrained and cold-blooded. One seems to see Shakespeare, with his bright eyes and his large lips and buoyant face, watching with a pleasant excitement the excesses of his thin-lipped and calculating creation, as though they were the excesses of a real person. It is the complete picture of a natural hypocrite, who does not consciously disguise strong impulses, but whose very passions seem of their own accord to have disguised themselves and retreated into the recesses of the character, yet only to recur even more dangerously when their proper period is expired, when the will is cheated into security by their absence, and the world (and, it may be, the "judicious person" himself) is impressed with a sure reliance in his chilling and remarkable rectitude.

It has, we believe, been doubted whether Shakespeare was a man much conversant with the intimate society of women. Of course no one denies that he possessed a great knowledge of them—a capital acquaintance with their excellences, faults, and foibles; but it has been thought that this was the result rather of imagination than of society, of creative fancy rather than of perceptive experience. Now that Shakespeare possessed, among other singular qualities, a remarkable imaginative knowledge of women, is quite certain, for he was acquainted with the soliloquies of women. A woman, we suppose, like a man, must be alone, in order to speak a soliloquy. After

the greatest possible intimacy and experience, it must still be imagination, or fancy at least, which tells any man what a woman thinks of herself and to herself. There will still—get as near the limits of confidence or observation as you can—be a space which must be filled up from other means. Men can only divine the truth—reserve, indeed, is a part of its charm. Seeing, therefore, that Shakespeare had done what necessarily and certainly must be done without experience, we were in some doubt whether he might not have dispensed with it altogether. A grave reviewer cannot know these things. We thought indeed of reasoning that since the delineations of women in Shakespeare were admitted to be first-rate, it should follow—at least there was a fair presumption—that no means or aid had been wanting to their production, and that consequently we ought, in the absence of distinct evidence, to assume that personal intimacy as well as solitary imagination had been concerned in their production. And we meant to cite the "questions about Octavia," which Lord Byron, who thought he had the means of knowing, declared to be "women all over".

But all doubt was removed and all conjecture set to rest by the coming in of an ably-dressed friend from the external world, who mentioned that the language of Shakespeare's women was essentially female language; that there were certain points and peculiarities in the English of cultivated English women, which made it a language of itself, which must be heard familiarly in order to be known. And he added, "Except a greater use of words of Latin derivation, as was natural in an age when ladies received a learned education, a few words not now proper, a few conceits that were the fashion of the time, and there is the very same English in the women's speeches in Shakespeare". He quoted—

> "Think not I love him, though I ask for him;
> 'Tis but a peevish boy:—yet he talks well;—
> But what care I for words? yet words do well,
> When he that speaks them pleases those that hear.
> It is a pretty youth:—not very pretty:—
> But, sure, he's proud; and yet his pride becomes him;
> He'll make a proper man. The best thing in him

Is his complexion ; and faster than his tongue
Did make offence, his eye did heal it up.
He is not tall ; yet for his years he's tall :
His leg is but so-so : and yet 'tis well.
There was a pretty redness in his lip ;
A little riper and more lusty red
Than that mix'd in his cheek ; 'twas just the difference
Betwixt the constant red, and mingled damask.
There be some women, Silvius, had they mark'd him
In parcels as I did, would have gone near
To fall in love with him : but, for my part,
I love him not, nor hate him not ; and yet
I have more cause to hate him than to love him :
For what had he to do to chide at me ?
He said, my eyes were black, and my hair black,
And, now I am remember'd, scorn'd at me :
I marvel, why I answer'd not again :
But that's all one ; "[1]

and the passage of Perdita's cited before about the daffodils that—

"take
The winds of March with beauty ; violets dim,
But sweeter than the lids of Juno's eyes,
Or Cytherea's breath ; "

and said that these were conclusive. But we have not, ourselves, heard young ladies converse in that manner.

Perhaps it is in his power of delineating women, that Shakespeare contrasts most strikingly with the greatest master of the art of dialogue in antiquity—we mean Plato. It will, no doubt, be said that the delineation of women did not fall within Plato's plan ; that men's life was in that age so separate and predominant that it could be delineated by itself and apart ; and no doubt these remarks are very true. But what led Plato to form that plan ? What led him to select that peculiar argumentative aspect of life, in which the masculine element is in so high a degree superior ? We believe that he did it because he felt that he could paint that kind of scene much better than he could paint any other. If a person will consider the sort of conversation that was held in the cool summer morning, when

[1] "As You Like It," iii. 5.

Socrates was knocked up early to talk definitions and philosophy with Protagoras, he will feel, not only that women would fancy such dialogues to be certainly stupid, and very possibly to be without meaning, but also that the side of character which is there presented is one from which not only the feminine but even the epicene element is nearly, if not perfectly, excluded. It is the intellect surveying and delineating intellectual characteristics. We have a dialogue of thinking faculties; the character of every man is delineated by showing us, not his mode of action or feeling, but his mode of thinking, alone and by itself. The pure mind, purged of all passion and affection, strives to view and describe others in like manner; and the singularity is, that the likenesses so taken are so good—that the accurate copying of the merely intellectual effects and indications of character gives so true and so firm an impression of the whole character,—that a daguerreotype of the mind should almost seem to be a delineation of the life. But though in the hand of a consummate artist, such a way of representation may in some sense succeed in the case of men, it would certainly seem sure to fail in the case of women. The mere intellect of a woman is a mere nothing. It originates nothing, it transmits nothing, it retains nothing; it has little life of its own, and therefore it can hardly be expected to attain any vigour. Of the lofty Platonic world of the ideas, which the soul in the old doctrine was to arrive at by pure and continuous reasoning, women were never expected to know anything. Plato (though Mr. Grote denies that he was a practical man) was much too practical for that; he reserved his teaching for people whose belief was regulated and induced in some measure by abstract investigations; who had an interest in the pure and (as it were) geometrical truth itself; who had an intellectual character (apart from and accessory to their other character) capable of being viewed as a large and substantial existence. Shakespeare's being, like a woman's, worked as a whole. He was capable of intellectual abstractedness, but commonly he was touched with the sense of earth. One thinks of him as firmly set on our coarse world of common clay, but from it he could paint the moving essence

of thoughtful feeling—which is the best refinement of the best women. Imogen or Juliet would have thought little of the conversation of Gorgias.

On few subjects has more nonsense been written than on the learning of Shakespeare. In former times, the established tenet was, that he was acquainted with the entire range of the Greek and Latin classics, and familiarly resorted to Sophocles and Æschylus as guides and models. This creed reposed not so much on any painful or elaborate criticism of Shakespeare's plays, as on one of the *a priori* assumptions permitted to the indolence of the wise old world. It was then considered clear, by all critics, that no one could write good English who could not also write bad Latin. Questioning scepticism has rejected this axiom, and refuted with contemptuous facility the slight attempt which had been made to verify this case of it from the evidence of the plays themselves. But the new school, not content with showing that Shakespeare was no formed or elaborate scholar, propounded the idea that he was quite ignorant, just as Mr. Croker "demonstrates" that Napoleon Bonaparte could scarcely write or read. The answer is, that Shakespeare wrote his plays, and that those plays show not only a very powerful, but also a very cultivated mind. A hard student Shakespeare was not, yet he was a happy and pleased reader of interesting books. He was a natural reader; when a book was dull he put it down, when it looked fascinating he took it up, and the consequence is, that he remembered and mastered what he read. Lively books, read with lively interest, leave strong and living recollections; the instructors, no doubt, say that they ought not to do so, and inculcate the necessity of dry reading. Yet the good sense of a busy public has practically discovered that what is read easily is recollected easily, and what is read with difficulty is remembered with more. It is certain that Shakespeare read the novels of his time, for he has founded on them the stories of his plays; he read Plutarch, for his words still live in the dialogue of the "proud Roman" plays; and it is remarkable that Montaigne is the only philosopher that Shakespeare can be proved to have read, because he deals more than any other philosopher with the first impressions of things

which exist. On the other hand, it may be doubted if Shakespeare would have perused his commentators. Certainly, he would have never read a page of this review, and we go so far as to doubt whether he would have been pleased with the admirable discourses of M. Guizot, which we ourselves, though ardent admirers of his style and ideas, still find it a little difficult to *read*;—and what would he have thought of the following speculations of an anonymous individual, whose notes have been recently published in a fine octavo by Mr. Collier, and, according to the periodical essayists, "contribute valuable suggestions to the illustration of the immortal bard"?

"THE TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA.

"ACT I. SCENE I.

"P. 92. The reading of the subsequent line has hitherto been

'Tis true ; for you are over boots in love' ;

but the manuscript corrector of the Folio, 1632, has changed it to

'Tis true ; *but* you are over boots in love,'

which seems more consistent with the course of the dialogue ; for Proteus, remarking that Leander had been 'more than over shoes in love, with Hero, Valentine answers, that Proteus was even more deeply in love than Leander. Proteus observes of the fable of Hero and Leander—

'That's a deep story of a deeper love,
For he was more than over shoes in love'.

Valentine retorts—

'Tis true ; *but* you are over boots in love'.

For instead of *but* was perhaps caught by the compositor from the preceding line."

It is difficult to fancy Shakespeare perusing a volume of such annotations, though we allow that we admire them ourselves. As to the controversy on his school learning, we have only to say, that though the alleged imitations of the Greek tragedians are mere nonsense, yet there is clear evidence that Shakespeare received the ordinary grammar-school education of his time, and that he had derived from the pain and suffering of several years, not exactly an acquaintance with Greek or

Latin, but, like Eton boys, a firm conviction that there are such languages.

Another controversy has been raised as to whether Shakespeare was religious. In the old editions it is commonly enough laid down that, when writing his plays, he had no desire to fill the Globe Theatre, but that his intentions were of the following description: "In this play, 'Cymbeline,' Shakespeare has strongly depicted the frailties of our nature, and the effect of vicious passions on the human mind. In the fate of the Queen we behold the adept in perfidy justly sacrificed by the arts she had, with unnatural ambition, prepared for others; and in reviewing her death and that of Cloten, we may easily call to mind the words of Scripture," etc. And of "King Lear" it is observed with great confidence, that Shakespeare, "*no doubt*, intended to mark particularly the afflicting character of children's ingratitude to their parents, and the conduct of Goneril and Regan to each other; *especially* in the former's poisoning the latter, and laying hands on *herself*, we are taught that those who want gratitude towards their parents (who gave them their being, fed them, nurtured them to *man's* estate) will not scruple to commit more barbarous crimes, and easily to forget that, by destroying their body, they destroy their soul also". And Dr. Ulrici, a very learned and illegible writer, has discovered that in every one of his plays Shakespeare had in view the inculcation of the peculiar sentiments and doctrines of the Christian religion, and considers the "Midsummer Night's Dream" to be a specimen of the lay or amateur sermon. This is what Dr. Ulrici thinks of Shakespeare; but what would Shakespeare have thought of Dr. Ulrici? We believe that "*Via*, goodman Dull," is nearly the remark which the learned professor would have received from the poet to whom his very careful treatise is devoted. And yet, without prying into the Teutonic mysteries, a gentleman of missionary aptitudes might be tempted to remark that in many points Shakespeare is qualified to administer a rebuke to people of the prevalent religion. Meeting a certain religionist is like striking the corner of a wall. He is possessed of a firm and rigid persuasion that you must leave off this and that, stop, cry, be anxious, be advised, and, above

all things, refrain from doing what you like, for nothing is so bad for any one as that. And in quite another quarter of the religious hemisphere, we occasionally encounter gentlemen who have most likely studied at the feet of Dr. Ulrici, or at least of an equivalent Gamaliel, and who, when we, or such as we, speaking the language of mortality, remark of a pleasing friend: "Nice fellow, so and so! Good fellow as ever lived!" reply sternly, upon an unsuspecting reviewer, with—"Sir, is he an *earnest* man?" To which, in some cases, we are unable to return a sufficient answer. Yet, Shakespeare, differing, in that respect at least, from the disciples of Carlyle, had, we suspect, an objection to grim people, and we fear would have liked the society of Mercutio better than that of a dreary divine, and preferred Ophelia or "that Juliet" to a female philanthropist of sinewy aspect. And, seriously, if this world is not all evil, he who has understood and painted it best must probably have some good. If the underlying and almighty essence of this world be good, then it is likely that the writer who most deeply approached to that essence will be himself good. There is a religion of week-days as well as of Sundays, of "cakes and ale"[1] as well as of pews and altar cloths. This England lay before Shakespeare as it lies before us all, with its green fields, and its long hedgerows, and its many trees, and its great towns, and its endless hamlets, and its motley society, and its long history, and its bold exploits, and its gathering power, and he saw that they were good. To him, perhaps, more than to any one else, has it been given to see that they were a great unity, a great religious object; that if you could only descend to the inner life, to the deep things, to the secret principles of its noble vigour, to the essence of character, to what we know of Hamlet and seem to fancy of Ophelia, we might, so far as we are capable of so doing, understand the nature which God has made. Let us, then, think of him not as a teacher of dry dogmas, or a sayer of hard sayings, but as—

> "A priest to us all,
> Of the wonder and bloom of the world"—[2]

[1] "Twelfth Night," iii. 2.

[2] Matthew Arnold: "The Youth of Nature".

a teacher of the hearts of men and women ; one from whom may be learned something of that inmost principle that ever modulates—

> " With murmurs of the air,
> And motions of the forests and the sea,
> And voice of living beings, and woven hymns,
> Of night and day and the deep heart of man ". [1]

We must pause, lest our readers reject us, as the Bishop of Durham the poor curate, because he was " mystical and confused ".

Yet it must be allowed that Shakespeare was worldly, and the proof of it is, that he succeeded in the world. Possibly this is the point on which we are most richly indebted to tradition. We see generally indeed in Shakespeare's works the popular author, the successful dramatist ; there is a life and play in his writings rarely to be found, except in those who have had habitual good luck, and who, by the tact of experience, feel the minds of their readers at every word, as a good rider feels the mouth of his horse. But it would have been difficult quite to make out whether the profits so accruing had been profitably invested—whether the genius to create such illusions was accompanied with the care and judgment necessary to put out their proceeds properly in actual life. We could only have said that there was a general impression of entire calmness and equability in his principal works, rarely to be found where there is much pain, which usually makes gaps in the work, and dislocates the balance of the mind. But happily here, and here almost alone, we are on sure historical ground. The reverential nature of Englishmen has carefully preserved what they thought the great excellence of their poet—that he made a fortune.[2] It is certain that Shakespeare was proprietor of

[1] Shelley : " Alastor ".

[2] The only antiquarian thing which can be fairly called an anecdote of Shakespeare is, that Mrs. Alleyne, a shrewd woman in those times, and married to Mr. Alleyne, the founder of Dulwich Hospital, was one day, in the absence of her husband, applied to on some matter by a player who gave a reference to Mr. Hemmings (the " notorious " Mr. Hemmings, the commentators say) and to Mr. Shakespeare of the Globe, and that the latter, when referred to, said : " Yes, certainly, he knew him, and he was

the Globe Theatre—that he made money there, and invested the same in land at Stratford-on-Avon, and probably no circumstance in his life ever gave him so much pleasure. It was a great thing that he, the son of the wool-comber, the poacher, the good-for-nothing, the vagabond (for so we fear the phrase went in Shakespeare's youth), should return upon the old scene a substantial man, a person of capital, a freeholder, a gentleman to be respected, and over whom even a burgess could not affect the least superiority. The great pleasure in life is doing what people say you cannot do. Why did Mr. Disraeli take the duties of the Exchequer with so much relish? Because people said he was a novelist, an *ad captandum* man, and—*monstrum horrendum!*—a Jew, that could not add up. No doubt it pleased his inmost soul to do the work of the red-tape people better than those who could do nothing else. And so with Shakespeare: it pleased him to be respected by those whom he had respected with boyish reverence, but who had rejected the imaginative man—on their own ground and in their own subject, by the only title which they would regard—in a word, as a moneyed man. We seem to see him eyeing the burgesses with good-humoured fellowship and genial (though suppressed and half-unconscious) contempt, drawing out their old stories, and acquiescing in their foolish notions, with everything in his head and easy sayings upon his tongue,—a full mind and a deep dark eye, that played upon an easy scene—now in fanciful solitude, now in cheerful society; now occupied with deep thoughts, now, and equally so, with trivial recreations, forgetting the dramatist in the man of substance, and the poet in the happy companion; beloved and even respected with a hope for every one and a smile for all.

a rascal and good-for-nothing". The proper speech of a substantial man such as it is worth while to give a reference to.

BISHOP BUTLER.[1]

(1854.)

ABOUT the close of the last century, some one discovered the wife of a country rector in the act of destroying, for culinary purposes, the last remnants of a box of sermons, which seemed to have been written by Joseph Butler. The lady was reproved, but the exculpatory rejoinder was, "Why, the box was full once, and I thought they were my husband's". Nevertheless, when we first saw the above announcement of unpublished remains, we hoped her exemplary diligence had not been wholly successful, and that some important writings of Butler had been discovered. In this we have been disappointed. The remains in question are slight and rather trivial; the longest is an additional letter addressed to Dr. Clarke; and in all the rest there is scarcely anything very characteristic, except the remark: "What a wonderful incongruity it is for a man to see the doubtfulness in which things are involved, and yet be impatient out of action or vehement in it. Say a man is a sceptic, and add what was said of Brutus, *quicquid vult valde vult*, and you say there is the greatest contrariety between his understanding and temper that can be expressed in words:"[2]—an observation which might be borne in mind by some English writers who panegyrise Julius Cæsar, and the many French ones who panegyrise Napoleon.

The life of Butler is one of those in which the events are

[1] *Some Remains (hitherto unpublished) of Joseph Butler, LL.D., sometime Lord Bishop of Durham.*

Encyclopædia Britannica, Vol. VI., Part II. Article, Joseph Butler. By Henry Rogers, Author of the *Eclipse of Faith.* Eighth Edition.

[2] *Fragments*, No. ii.

few, the transitions simple, and the final result strange. He was the son of a dissenting shopkeeper in Berkshire, was always of a meditative disposition and reading habit—grew to manhood—destined to the Dissenting ministry—began to question the principles of Dissent—entered at Oriel College—made valuable acquaintances there—rose in the Church by means of them—obtained, first the chaplaincy of the Rolls, then a decent living—then the rectory of Stanhope, the "golden" rectory, one of the best in the English Church—was recommended by his old friends to Queen Caroline—talked philosophy to her—pleased her (this being her favourite topic)—was made Bishop of Bristol, and thence translated to the richest of Anglican dignities—the prince-bishopric of Durham, and there died.

These are the single steps, and there is none of them which is remote from our ordinary observation. We should not be surprised to see any of them every day. But when we look on the life as a whole, when we see its nature, when we observe the son of a dissenting tradesman, a person of simple and pious disposition, of retiring habits, and scrupulous and investigating mind—in a word, the least worldly of ecclesiastics—attain to the most secular of ecclesiastical dignities, be a prince as well as a bishop, become the great magnate of the North or England, and dispense revenues to be envied by many a foreign potentate, we perceive the singularity of such a man with such beginnings attaining such a fortune. No man could guess from Butler's writings that he ever had the disposing of five pounds: it is odd to think what he did with the mining property and landed property, the royalties and rectories, coal dues and curacies, that he must have heard of from morning till evening.

It is certainly most strange that such a man should ever have been made a bishop. In general we observe that those become most eminent in the sheep-fold, who partake most eminently of the qualities of the wolf. Nor is this surprising. The Church is (as the Article defines it) a congregation of men, faithful indeed, but faithful in various degrees. In every corporation or combination of men, no matter for what purpose collected, there are certain secular qualities which attain emi-

nence as surely as oil rises above water. Attorneys are for the world, and the world is for attorneys. Activity, vigour, sharp-sightedness, tact, boldness, watchfulness, and such qualities as these, raise a man in the Church as certainly as in the State; so long as there is wealth and preferment in the one they will be attained a good deal as wealth and office are in the other. The *prowling* faculties will have their way. Those who hunger and thirst after riches will have riches, and those who hunger not will not. Still to this there are exceptions, and Butler's case is one of them. We might really fancy the world had determined to give for once an encouraging instance of its sensibility to rectitude, of the real and great influence of real and great virtue.

The period at which Butler's elevation occurred certainly does not diminish the oddness of the phenomenon. We are not indeed of those, mostly disciples of Carlyle or Newman, who speak with untempered contempt of the eighteenth century. Rather, if we might trust our own feelings, we view it with appreciating regard. It was the age of substantial comfort. The grave and placid historian (we speak of Mr. Hallam), going learnedly over the generations of men, is disposed to think that there never was so much happiness before or since. Employment was plentiful; industry remunerative. The advantages of material civilisation were enjoyed, and its penalties scarcely foreseen. The troubles of the seventeenth century had died out; those of the nineteenth had not begun. Cares were few; the stir and conflict in which we live had barely commenced. It was not an age to trouble itself with prospective tasks; it had no feverish excitement, nor over-intellectual introspection; it lived on the fat of the land; *quieta non movere*, was its motto. Like most comfortable people, those of that time possessed a sleepy, supine sagacity, they had no fine imaginings, no exquisite fancies; but a coarse sense of what was common, a "large roundabout common-sense" (these are Locke's words), which was their guide in what concerned them. Some may not think this romantic enough to be attractive, and yet it has a beauty of its own. They did not "look before or after," nor "pine for what was not";[1] they enjoyed what was; a solid

[1] Shelley: "To a Skylark".

homeliness was their mark. Exactly as we like to see a large lazy animal lying in the placid shade, without anxiety for the future and chewing the cud of the past, we like to look back at the age of our great-grandfathers, so solid in its habits and placid in the lapse of years. Nevertheless—and this is what is to our purpose—we must own at once that the very merits of that age are of the earth, earthy; there was no talk then of "obstinate questionings," or "incommunicable dream";[1] heroism, enthusiasm, the sense of the supernatural, deep feeling, seem in a manner foreign to the very idea of it. This is the point of view in which the Tractarian movement was described as "tending towards the realisation of something better and nobler than satisfied the last century".[2] For the clergy, the time was indeed evil. The popular view of the profession seems accurately expressed in a well-known book of memoirs. "But if this was your opinion, how came you not to let your friend Sherlock," the well-known bishop, "into the secret? Why did you not tell him that half the pack, and those you most depended on, were drawn off, and the game escaped and safe, instead of leaving his lordship there to bark and yelp by himself, and make the silly figure he has done?" "Oh," said Lord Carteret, "he talks like a parson, and consequently is so used to talk to people who do not mind him, that I left him to find it out at his leisure, and shall have him again for all this, whenever I want him."[3]

The fact of Butler's success is to be accounted for, as we have said, by his personal excellence. Mr. Talbot liked him, *Bishop* Talbot liked him, the Queen liked him, the King liked him. He says himself in these Remains, "Good men surely are not treated in this world as they deserve, yet 'tis seldom, very seldom, their goodness makes them disliked, even in cases where it may seem to be so; but 'tis some behaviour or other which, however excusable, perhaps infinitely overbalanced by their virtues, yet is offensive, possibly wrong, however such, it may be, as would pass off very well in a man of the world".[4]

[1] Shelley: "Alastor".

[2] John Henry Newman: Letter to Dr. Jelf on *Tract Ninety*.

[3] Lord Hervey's *Memoirs of the Reign of George II.*, chap. xxxi.

[4] *Fragments*, No. ii.

And he must have been alive to the fact in practice. He had every excuse for making virtue detestable. He was educated a Baptist, and brought up at a dissenting academy. He was born in the vulgarest years of English Puritanism, when it had fallen from its first estate, when it had least influence with the higher classes, when the revival which dates from John Wesley had not begun, and the very memory of gentlemen such as Hutchinson or Hampden had passed away. A certain instinctive refinement, a "niceness" and gentleness of nature, preserved him not only from the coarser consequences of his position, but even from that angularity of mind which is not often escaped by those early trained to object to what is established.

Of his character the principal point may be described in the words which Dr. Arnold so often uses to denote the end and aim of his education, "moral thoughtfulness". A certain considerateness is, as it were, diffused over all his sentences. To most men conscience is an occasional, almost an external voice; to Butler it was a daily companion, a close anxiety. In a recent novel this disposition is skilfully delineated and delicately contrasted with its opposite. We may quote the passage, though it is encumbered with some detail. "But what was a real trouble to Charles," this is the person whose character is in question, "it got clearer and clearer to his apprehension, that his intimacy with Sheffield was not quite what it had been. They had indeed passed the vacation together, and saw of each other more than ever; but their sympathies with each other were not as strong, they had not the same likings and dislikings; in short, they had not such congenial minds, as when they were freshmen. There was not so much heart in their conversations, and they more easily endured to miss each other's company. They were both reading for honours, reading hard; but Sheffield's whole heart was in his work, and religion was but a secondary matter with him. He had no doubts, difficulties, anxieties, sorrows, which much affected him. It was not the certainty of faith which made a sunshine in his soul, and dried up the mists of human weakness; rather he had no perceptible need within him of that

vision of the unseen, which is the Christian's life. He was unblemished in his character, exemplary in his conduct, but he was content with what the perishable world gave him. Charles's characteristic, perhaps more than anything else, was an habitual sense of the Divine Presence—a sense which, of course, did not ensure uninterrupted conformity of thought and deed to itself, but still there it was: the pillar of the cloud before him and guiding him. He felt himself to be God's creature, and responsible to Him; God's possession, not his own."[1] Again the same character is brought home to us, in a part of Walton's delineation of Hooker, which, indeed, except perhaps for the great quickness attributed to his intellect, might as a whole stand well enough for a description of Butler: "His complexion (if we may guess by him at the age of forty) was sanguine, with a mixture of choler; and yet his motion was slow even in his youth, and so was his speech, never expressing an earnestness in either of them, but an humble gravity suited to the aged. And it is observed (so far as inquiry is able to look back at this distance of time) that at his being a schoolboy he was an early questionist, quietly inquisitive why this was granted and that denied; this being mixed with a remarkable modesty and a sweet serene quietness of nature. . . . It is observable that he was never known to be . . . extreme in any of his desires; never heard to repine or dispute with Providence, but, by a quiet gentle submission and resignation of his will to the wisdom of the Creator, bore the burden of the day with patience; . . . and by this, and a grave behaviour, which is a divine charm, he begot an early reverence for his person even from those that, at other times and in other companies, took a liberty to cast off that strictness of behaviour and discourse that is required in a collegiate life." Something of this is a result of disposition; yet on the whole it seems mainly the effect of the "moral thoughtfulness" which has been mentioned.

The very name of this quality reminds us of a difficulty. We cannot but doubt, with the experience of this age, how far this can be made, or ought to be made, the abiding sentiment

[1] John Henry Newman's *Loss and Gain*, vol. ii., chap. ix.

of all men; how far such teaching as that of Arnold's tends to introduce a too stiff and anxious habit of mind; how far the perpetual presence of a purpose will interfere with the simple happiness of life, and how far also it *can* be forced on the "lilies of the field"; how far the care of anxious minds and active thoughts is to be obtruded on the young, on the cheerful, on the natural. Other questions, too, might be asked, if the inculcation of this temper and habit as a daily, universal obligation, a perpetual and general necessity for all characters, would not, or might not, impair the sanguine energy and masculine activity which are necessary for social action; whether it does not, in matter of fact, even now, "burn and brand" into excitable fancies a few stern truths more deeply than a feeble reason will bear or the equilibrium of the world demands? But whatever be the issue of such questions, on which there is perhaps now no decided or established opinion, there can be no question of the charm of such a character in those to whom it is natural. We may admire what we cannot share; reverence what we do not imitate. As those who cannot comprehend a strain of soothing music, look with interest on those who can; as those who cannot feel the gentle glow of a quiet landscape, yet stand aside and seem inferior to those who do; so in character the buoyant and the bold, the harsh and the practical, may, at least for the moment, moralise and look upwards, reverence and do homage, when they come to a close experience of what is gentler and simpler, more anxious and more thoughtful, kinder and more religious than themselves. At any rate, so thought the contemporaries of Butler. They did, as a Frenchman would say, "their possible" for a good man; at least they made him a bishop.

We gather, however, that their kindness was scarcely successful. Butler was very prosperous; but it does not appear that he was at all happy. In the midst of the princely establishment of his rich episcopate, so anxious a nature found time to be rather melancholy. The responsibilities of so cumbrous a position were but little pleasant to an apprehensive disposition; wealth and honour were finery and foolishness to a quiet and shrinking man. A small room in a tranquil college, daily

walks and thoughtful talk, a little income and a few friends—these, and these only, suit a still and meditative mind. Such, however, were denied him. He is said to have taken much pleasure in discussion and interchange of mind; but his life was passed in courts and country parsonages—the one too noisy, the last too still, to think or reason. Nor were there many people, whom we know of, that were congenial to him in that age. Scarcely any name of a friend of his has come down to us; one, indeed, there is—that of Bishop Secker, afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury, the author of a treatise on the Catechism, a serious work still used for the purposes of tuition, with which, indeed, the name of the writer is now with some so associated by early habit that it is difficult to fancy even Butler on equal social terms with him; the notion of talking to him seems like being asked to converse familiarly with the Catechism itself.

A not unremarkable circumstance, however, shows that Secker, though he was educated at the same academy, could not have been on any terms of extreme intimacy with Butler. Some time after Butler's death, there was a rumour that he had died a Papist. There is no doubt, in fact, that Butler's opinions, being formed on principles of evidence and reasoning too strict to be extremely popular, were not likely to be agreeable to those about him, and when an Englishman sees anything in religion which he does not like, he always, *primâ facie*, imputes it to the Pope. Besides this general and strong argument, there were two particular ones—first, that he had erected a cross in the Episcopal chapel at Bristol; secondly, that he was of a melancholy and somewhat of an ascetic turn; reasons which, though doubtless of force in their day and generation, are not likely to be of avail with us, who know so much more about crosses and fasting than they did then. We might have expected that Secker, as Butler's old friend and schoolfellow, would have been able from his personal knowledge to throw a good deal of light upon the question. He was only, however, able to advance "*presumptive* arguments that Bishop Butler did not die a Papist," which were no doubt valuable; but yet give no great idea of the intimacy between the writer and the

person about whom he was writing. Such arguments may easily be found, and have always convinced every one that there was no truth in this rumour. The only reason for which we wish that Secker had been able to say he had heard Butler talk on the subject, and that he was no Papist, is, that we should then have known to whom Butler talked. There is nothing in Butler's writings at all showing any leaning to the peculiar tenets of Roman Catholicism, and there is much which shows a strong opinion against them; and it was far too extreme a doctrine to be at all agreeable to his very English, moderate, and shrinking mind.

Calumny, however, is commonly instructive. It must be granted, that though there is no trace or tendency in the writings of Butler to the peculiar superstitions advocated by the Pope, there is a strong and prevailing tinge of what may be called the principle of superstition, that is, the religion of fear. Some may doubt, especially at the present day, whether there be any true religion of that kind at all; yet it seems, as Butler would have said, but a proper feeling "in such creatures as we are, in such a world as the present one".[1]

We may reflect that there are too kinds of religion, which may for some purposes be called, the one the natural, and the other the supernatural. The former seems to take its rise from mere contemplation of external beauty. We look on the world, and we see that it is good. The Greek of former time, reclining softly in his own bright land, "looked up to the whole sky and declared that the One was God". From the blue air and the fair cloud, the green earth and the white sea, a presence streams upon us. It modulates—

> "With murmurs of the air,
> And motions of the forest and the sea,
> And voice of living beings and woven hymns
> Of night and day, and the deep heart of man".[2]

But the true home of the idea is in the starlight sky; we instinctively mingle it with an admiration of infinite space, a cold purity is around us, and the clear and steel-like words of

[1] See Bishop Halifax's Preface to the *Analogy*.
[2] Shelley: "Alastor".

the poet justly reflect the doctrine of the clear and steel-like heaven :—

> "The magic car moved on.
> Earth's distant orb appeared
> The smallest light that twinkles in the heaven ;
> Whilst round the chariot's way
> Innumerable systems rolled,
> And countless spheres diffused
> An ever-varying glory.
> It was a sight of wonder : some
> Were hornèd like the crescent moon ;
> Some shed a mild and silver beam
> Like Hesperus across the western sea ;
> Some dashed athwart with trains of flame,
> Like worlds to death and ruin driven ;
> Some shone like suns, and, as the chariot passed,
> Eclipsed all other light.
> Spirit of nature ! here !
> In this interminable wilderness
> Of worlds, at whose immensity
> Even soaring fancy staggers,
> Here is thy fitting temple.
> Yet not the lightest leaf
> That quivers to the passing breeze
> Is less instinct with thee :
> Yet not——" [1]

And so on ; and so it will be as long as there are poets to look upon the sky, or a sky to be looked at by them. The truth is, that there is a certain expressiveness (if we may so speak) in nature which persons of imagination naturally feel more acutely than others, and which cannot easily be in its full degree brought home to others, except in quotations of their writings, from which "smiling of the world," as it has been called, more than from any other outward appearance, we infer the existence of an immaterial and animating spirit. This expressiveness perhaps produces its effect on the mind, by a principle analogous to, perhaps in a severe analysis identical with, the interpretative faculty by which we acquire a cognizance of the existence of other human minds. There appear to be certain natural signs and tokens from which we

[1] Shelley : "Queen Mab".

(like other animals) instinctively infer, or rather—for there is no conscious reasoning—in which we silently *see*, life and thought and mind. In this way we interpret the detail of natural expression—the smile, the glance of the eye, the common interjections, the universal tokens of our simplest emotions; those signs and marks and expressions which we make in our earliest infancy without teaching and by instinct, we appear also, by instinct and without learning, to read off, interpret, and comprehend, when used to us by others. The comprehension of this language is perhaps as much an instinct as the using of it. There is no occasion, however, for acute metaphysics; whatever was the origin of this faculty, such a power of interpreting material phenomena, such a faculty of *seeing* life, undoubtedly there is;—however we come by the power, we *can* distinguish living from dead creatures. At any rate, if, like other living creatures, we take a natural cognizance of the simple expressions of life and mind, and without tuition comprehend the language and meaning of natural signs, in like manner, though less clearly and forcibly, because our attention is so much less forcibly directed to them, do we interpret the significance of the beauty and the sublimity of outward nature. "In the mountains" do we "feel our faith".[1] We seem to know there is something behind. There is a perception of something—

> "Far more deeply interfused,
> Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
> And the round ocean and the living air,
> And the blue sky, and in the mind of man—
> A motion and a spirit that impels
> All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
> And rolls through all things". [2]

The Greek mythology is one entire and unmixed embodiment of this religion of nature, as we may term it, this poetic interpretation of the spirit that speaks to us in the signs and symbols within us. Nor can any sensitive or imaginative mind scrutinise itself without being distinctly conscious of its teaching.

[1] Wordsworth: "Excursion," book i. [2] *Ibid.*: "Tintern Abbey".

Now of the poetic religion there is nothing in Butler. No one could tell from his writings that the universe was beautiful. If the world were a Durham mine or an exact square, if no part of it were more expressive than a gravel-pit or a chalk-quarry, the teaching of Butler would be as true as it is now. A young poet, not a very wise one, once said, "he did not like the Bible, there was nothing about flowers in it".[1] He might have said so of Butler with great truth; a most ugly and stupid world one would fancy *his* books were written in. But in return and by way of compensation for this, there is a religion of another sort, a religion the source of which is within the mine, as the other's was found to be in the world without; the religion to which we just now alluded as the religion (by an odd yet expressive way of speaking) of *superstition*. The source of this, as most persons are practically aware, is in the conscience. The moral principle (whatever may be said to the contrary by complacent thinkers) is really and to most men a principle of fear. The delights of a good conscience may be reserved for better things, but few men who know themselves will say that they have often felt them by vivid and actual experience. A sensation of shame, of reproach, of remorse, of sin (to use the word we instinctively shrink from because it expresses the meaning), is what the moral principle really and practically thrusts on most men. Conscience is the condemnation of ourselves. We expect a penalty. As the Greek proverb teaches, "where there is shame there is fear"; where there is the deep and intimate anxiety of guilt—the feeling which has driven murderers, and other than murderers, forth to wastes, and rocks, and stones, and tempests—we see, as it were, in a single complex and indivisible sensation, the pain and sense of guilt, and the painful anticipation of its punishment. How to be free from this, is the question. How to get loose from this—how to be rid of the secret tie which binds the strong man and cramps his pride, and makes him angry at the beauty of the universe—which will not let him go forth like a great animal, like the king of the forest, in the glory of his might, but restrains him with an inner fear and a

[1] Hazlitt: Northcote's *Conversations*, x.

secret foreboding, that if he do but exalt himself he shall be abased; if he do but set forth his own dignity, he will offend ONE who will deprive him of it. This, as has often been pointed out, is the source of the bloody rites of heathendom. You are going to battle, you are going out in the bright sun with dancing plumes and glittering spear; your shield shines, and your feathers wave, and your limbs are glad with the consciousness of strength, and your mind is warm with glory and renown,—with coming glory and unobtained renown,—for who are you, to hope for these—who are *you*, to go forth proudly against the pride of the sun, with your secret sin and your haunting shame, and your real fear? First lie down and abase yourself—strike your back with hard stripes—cut deep with a sharp knife as if you would eradicate the consciousness—cry aloud—put ashes on your head—bruise yourself with stones, then perhaps God may pardon you; or, better still—so runs the incoherent feeling—give Him something—your ox, your ass, whole hecatombs, if you are rich enough; anything, it is but a chance—you do not know what will please Him—at any rate, what you love best yourself—that is, most likely, your first-born son; then, after such gifts and such humiliation, He may be appeased, He may let you off—He may without anger let you go forth Achilles-like in the glory of your shield—He may *not* send you home as He would else, the victim of rout and treachery, with broken arms and foul limbs, in weariness and humiliation.

Of course, it is not this kind of fanaticism that we impute to a prelate of the English Church: human sacrifices are not respectable, and Achilles was not rector of Stanhope. But though the costume and circumstances of life change, the human heart does not; its feelings remain. The same anxiety, the same consciousness of personal sin, which led in barbarous times to what has been described, show themselves in civilised life as well. In this quieter period, their great manifestation is scrupulosity, a care about the ritual of life, an attention to meats and drinks, and cups and washings. Being so unworthy as we are, feeling what we feel, abased as we are abased, who shall say that these are beneath us? In ardent imaginative

youth they may seem so, but let a few years come, let them dull the will or contract the heart, or stain the mind—then the consequent feeling will be, as all experience shows, not that a ritual is too mean, too low, too degrading for human nature, but that it is a mercy we have to do no more—that we have only to wash in Jordan—that we have not even to go out into the unknown distance to seek for Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus. We have no right to judge, we cannot decide, we must do what is laid down for us,—we fail daily even in this,—we must never cease for a moment in our scrupulous anxiety to omit by no tittle and to exceed by no iota. An accomplished divine of the present day has written a dissertation to show that this sort of piety is that expressed by the Greek word *εὐλάβεια*, "piety contemplated on the side on which it is a fear of God," and which he derives from *εὐλαμβάνεσθαι*, "the image underlying the word being that of the careful taking hold, the cautious handling of some precious yet delicate vessel, which with ruder or less anxious handling might be broken," and he subsequently adds: "The only three places in the New Testament in which *εὐλαβὴς* occurs are these: Luke ii. 25, Acts ii. 5, viii. 2. We have uniformly rendered it 'devout,' nor could this translation be bettered. It will be observed that on all these occasions it is used to express Jewish, and, as one might say, Old Testament piety. On the first it is applied to Simeon (*δίκαιος καὶ εὐλαβὴς*); on the second to those Jews who came from distant parts to keep the commanded feasts at Jerusalem; and on the third there can scarcely be a doubt that the *ἄνδρες εὐλαβεῖς* who carry Stephen to his burial are not, as might at first sight appear, *Christian* brethren, but devout Jews, who showed by this courageous act of theirs, as by their great lamentation over the slaughtered saints, that they abhorred this deed of blood, that they separated themselves in spirit from it, and thus, if it might be, from all the judgments which it would bring down on the city of those murderers. Whether it was also further given them to believe on the Crucified who had such witnesses as Stephen, we are not told; we may well presume that it was. . . . If we keep in mind that in that

mingled fear and love which together constitute the piety of man toward God, the Old Testament placed its emphasis on the fear, the New places it on the love (though there was love in the fear of God's saints then, as there must be fear in their love now), it will at once be evident how fitly εὐλαβὴς was chosen to set forth their piety under the old covenant, who, like Zacharias and Elizabeth, were righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless, and leaving nothing willingly undone which pertained to the circle of their prescribed duties. For this sense of accurately and scrupulously performing that which is prescribed with the consciousness of the danger of slipping into a negligent performance of God's service, and of the need therefore of anxiously watching against the adding to or diminishing from, or in any other way altering, that which is commanded, lies ever in the words εὐλαβὴς, εὐλάβεια, when used in their religious signification. Plutarch, in more than one instructive passage, exalts the εὐλάβεια of the old Romans in divine matters, as contrasted with the comparative carelessness of the Greeks. Thus, in his 'Coriolanus,' after other instances in proof, he goes on to say, 'Of late times also they did renew and begin a sacrifice thirty times one after another, because they thought still there fell out one fault or another in the same; so holy and devout were they to the gods' (τοιαύτη μὲν εὐλάβεια πρὸς τὸ θεῖον, Ῥωμαίων). Elsewhere he portrays Æmilius Paulus as eminent for his εὐλάβεια. The passage is long, and I will only quote a portion of it, availing myself again of old Sir Thomas North's translation, which, though somewhat loose, is in essentials correct: 'When he did anything belonging to his office of priesthood, he did it with great experience, judgment, and diligence; leaving all other thoughts, and without omitting any ancient ceremony or adding any new; contending oftentimes with his companions in things which seemed light and of small moment; declaring to them that, though we do presume the gods are easy to be pacified and that they readily pardon all faults and scapes committed by negligence, yet if it were no more but for respect of the Commonwealth's sake, they should not slightly or care-

lessly dissemble or pass over faults committed in those matters'."[1]

This is the view suggested by what Butler has happily called the "presages of conscience," by the "natural fear and apprehension" of punishment, "which restrains from crimes and is a declaration of Nature against them". The great difficulty of religious philosophy is, to explain how we know that these two Beings are the same—from what course and principle of reasoning it is that we acquire our knowledge that the *curiosus Deus*, the watchful Deity, who is ever in our secret hearts, who seeks us out in the fairest scenes, who is apt to terrify our hearts, whose very eyes seem to shine through Nature, is the same Being that animates the universe with its beauty and its light, smoothes the heaviness from our brow and the weight from our hearts, pervades the floating cloud and buoyant air,—

> "And from the breezes, whether low or loud,
> And from the rain of every passing cloud,
> And from the singing of the summer birds,
> And from all sounds, all silence,"[2]

—gives hints of joy and hope. This seems the natural dualism —the singular contrast of the God of imagination and the God of conscience, the God of beauty and the God of fear. How do we know that the Being who refreshes is the same as He who imposes the toil, that the God of anxiety is the same as the God of help, that the intensely personal Deity of the inward heart is the same as the almost neutral spirit of external nature, which seems a thing more than a person, a light and impalpable vapour just beautifying the universe and no more?

If we are to offer a suggestion, as we have stated a difficulty, we should hold that the only way of obviating or explaining the contrast, which is so perplexing to susceptible minds, is by recurring to the same primary assumption which is required to satisfy our belief in God's infinity, omnipotence, or veracity. We cannot *prove* in any way that God is infinite any more than that space is infinite; nor that God is omnipotent, since

[1] Trench: *On the Synonyms of the New Testament* (p. 191).
[2] Shelley: "Epipsychidion".

we do not know what powers there are in Nature—that He is perfectly true, for we have had no experience or communication with Him, in which His veracity could be tested. We assume these propositions, and treat them, moreover, not as hypothetical assumptions or provisional theories to be discarded if new facts should be discovered, and to be rejected if more elaborate research should require it, but as positive and clear certainties, on which we must ever act, and to which we must reduce and square all new information that may be brought home to us. In these respects we assume that God is perfect, and it is only necessary for the solution of our difficulty to assume that He is perfect in all. We have in both cases the same amount and description of evidence, the same inward consciousness, the same speaking and urging voice, requiring us to believe. In every step of religious argument we require the assumption, the belief, the faith if the word is better, in an absolutely *perfect* Being—in and by whom we are, who is omnipotent as well as most holy, who moves on the face of the whole world and ruleth all things by the word of His power. If we grant this, the difficulty of the opposition between what we have called the natural and the supernatural religion is removed; and without granting it, that difficulty is perhaps insuperable. It follows from the very idea and definition of an infinitely-perfect Being, that He is within us, as well as without us—ruling the clouds of the air, and the fishes of the sea, as well as the fears and thoughts of man—smiling through the smile of Nature, as well as warning with the pain of conscience, "Sine qualitate bonum; sine quantitate magnum; sine indigentiâ creatorem; sine situ præsidentem; sine habitu omnia continentem; sine loco ubique totum; sine tempore sempiternum; sine ullâ sui mutatione mutabilia facientem, nihilque patientem".[1] If we assume this, life is simple; without this all is dark.

The religion of the imagination is, in its consequences upon the character, free and poetical. No one need trouble himself to set about its defence. Its agreeability sufficiently defends it and its congeniality to a refined and literary age. The

[1] St. Augustine: *De Trinitate*, book v., chap. i., p. 2.

religion of the conscience will seem to many of the present day selfish and morbid. And doubtless it may become so if it be allowed to eat into the fibre of the character, and to supersede the manliness by which it should be supported. The whole of religion, of course, is not of this sort, and it is one which only very imperfect beings can have a share in. But so long as men are very imperfect, the sense of great imperfection should cleave to them, and while the consciousness of sin is on the mind, the consequent apprehension of deserved punishment seems in its proper degree to be a reasonable service. However, any more of this discussion is scarcely to our purpose. No attentive reader of Butler's writings will hesitate to say that he, at all events, was an example of the "anxious and scrupulous worshipper, who makes a conscience of changing anything, of omitting anything, being in all things fearful to offend,"[1] and most likely it was from this habit and characteristic of his mind, that he obtained the unenviable reputation of living and dying a Papist.

Of Butler's personal habits nothing in the way of detail has descended to us. He was never married, and there is no evidence of his ever having spoken to any lady save Queen Caroline. We hear, however, for certain that he was commonly present at her Majesty's philosophical parties, at which all questions religious and moral, speculative and practical, were discussed with a freedom that would astonish the present generation. Less intellectual unbelief existed probably at that time than there is now, but there was an infinitely freer expression of what did exist. The French Revolution frightened the English people. The awful calamities and horrors of that period were thought to be, as in part they were, the results and consequences of the irreligious opinions which just before prevailed. Scepticism became what in the days of Lord Hervey it was not, an ungentlemanly state of mind. At no meeting of the higher classes, certainly at none where ladies are present, is there a tenth part of the plain questioning and *bonâ fide* discussion of primary Christian topics, that there was at the select suppers of Queen Caroline. The effect of these may be seen

[1] Trench, *ubi supra*.

in many passages, and even in the whole tendency, of Butler's writings. No great Christian writer, perhaps, is so exclusively occupied with elementary topics and philosophical reasonings. His mind is ever directed towards the first principles of belief, and doubtless this was because, more than any other, he lived with men who plainly and clearly denied them. His frequent allusions to the difficulties of such discussions are likewise suggestive of a familiar personal experience. The whole list of directions which he gives the clergy of Durham on religious argument shows a daily familiarity with sceptical men. "It is come," he says, "I know not how, to be taken for granted by many persons that Christianity is not so much as a subject of inquiry, but that it is now at length discovered to be false. And accordingly they treat it as if this were an agreed point among all people of discernment, and nothing remained but to set it up as a principal subject of ridicule, as it were by way of reprisals for its having so long interrupted the pleasures of the world." No one would so describe the tone of talk now, nor would there be an equal reason for remembering Butler's general caution against rashly entering the lists with the questioners. Among gentlemen a clergyman has scarcely the chance. "Then, again, the general evidence of religion is complex and various. It consists of a long series of things: one preparatory to and confirming another from the beginning of the world till the present time, and it is easy to see how impossible it must be in a cursory conversation to unite all this into one argument, and represent it as it ought; and, could it be done, how utterly indisposed would people be to attend to it. I say, in cursory conversation; whereas unconnected objections are thrown out in few words, and are easily apprehended without more attention than is usual in common talk, so that, notwithstanding we have the best cause in the world, and though a man were very capable of defending it, yet I know not why he should be forward to undertake it upon so great a disadvantage and to so little good effect, as it must be amid the gaiety and carelessness of common conversation." It is not likely from these remarks that Butler had much pleasure at the Queen's talking parties.

What his pleasures were, indeed, does not very distinctly appear. In reading we doubt if he took any keen interest. A voracious reader is apt, when he comes to write, to exhibit his reading in casual references and careless innuendoes, which run out insensibly from the fulness of his literary memory. But of this in Butler there is nothing. His writings contain little save a bare and often not a very plain statement of the necessary argument; you cannot perhaps find a purely literary allusion in his writings; none, at all events, which shows he had any favourite books, whose topics were ever present to his mind, and whose well-known words might be a constant resource in moments of weariness and melancholy. There is, too, a philippic in the well-known "Preface" against vague and thoughtless reading, which seems as if he felt the evil consequences more than the agreeableness of that sin. Some men find a compensation in the excitement of writing, for all other evils and exclusions; but it is probable that, if Butler hated anything, he hated his pen. Composition is pleasant work for men of ready words, fine ears, and thick-coming illustrations. Wit and eloquence please the writer as much as the reader. There is even some pleasantness in feeling that you have given a precise statement of a strong argument. But Butler, so far from having the pleasures of eloquence, had not even the comfort of perspicuity. He never could feel that he had made an argument tell by his way of wording it; it tells in his writings, if it tells at all, by its own native and inherent force. In some places the mode of statement is even stupid; it seems selected to occasion a difficulty. You often see that writers—Gibbon, for instance—believe that their words are good to eat, as well as to read; they had plainly a pleasure in rolling them about in the mouth like sugar-plums, and gradually smoothing off any knots or excrescences; but there is nothing of this in Butler.

The circumstance of so great a thinker being such a poor writer is not only curious in itself, but indicates the class of thinkers to which Butler belongs. Philosophers may be divided into seers on the one hand, and into gropers on the other. Plato, to use a contrast which is often used for other purposes,

is the type of the first. On all subjects he seems to have before him a landscape of thought, with clear outline, and pure air, keen rocks and shining leaves, an Attic sky and crystal-flowing river, each detail of which was as present, as distinct, as familiar to his mind as the view from the Acropolis, or the Road to Decelea. As were his conceptions so is his style. What Protagoras said and Socrates replied, what Thrasymachus and Polemo, what Gorgias and Callicles, all comes out in distinct sequence and accurate expression; each feature is engraved on the paper; an exact beauty is in every line. What a contrast is the style of Aristotle! He sees nothing—he is like a man groping in the dark about a room which he knows. He hesitates and suggests; proposes first one formula and then another; rejects both, gives a multitude of reasons, and ends at last with an expression which he admits to be incorrect and an apologetic "let it make no difference". There are whole passages in his writings—the discussion about Solon and happiness in the *Ethics*, is an instance—in which he appears like a schoolboy who knows the answer to a sum, but cannot get the figures to come to it.

This awkward and hesitating manner is likewise that of Butler. He seems to have an obscure feeling, an undefined perception, of what the truth is; but his manipulation of words and images is not apt enough to bring it out. Like the miser in the story, he has a shilling *about* him somewhere, if people will only give him time and solitude to make research for it. As a person hunting for a word or name he has forgotten, he knows what it is, *only* he cannot say it. The fault is one characteristic of a strong and sound mind wanting in imagination. The visual faculty is deficient. The soundness of such men's understanding ensures a correct report of what comes before them, and its strength is shown in vigorous observations upon it; but they are unable to bring those remarks out, the delineative power is wanting, they have no picture of the particulars in their minds; no instance or illustration occurs to them. Popular, in the large sense of the term, such writers can never be. Influential they may often become. The learned have time for difficulties; the critical mind is pleased

with crooked constructions; the detective intellect likes the research for lurking and half-hidden truth. In this way portions of Aristotle have been noted these thousand years, as Chinese puzzles; and without detracting for a moment from Butler's real merit, it may be allowed that some of his influence, especially that which he enjoys in the English universities, is partially due to that obscurity of style, which renders his writings such apt exercises for the critical intellect, which makes the truth when found seem more valuable from the difficulty of finding it, and gives scope for an able lecturer to elucidate, annotate, and expound.

The fame of Butler rests mainly on two remarkable courses of reasoning, one of which is contained in the well-known Sermons, the second in the *Analogy*. Both seem to be in a great measure suggested by the circumstances and topics of the time. There was a certain naturalness in Butler's mind, which took him straight to the questions on which men differed around him. Generally it is safer to prove what no one denies, and easier to explain difficulties which no one has ever felt. A quiet reputation is best obtained in the literary *quæstiunculæ* of important subjects. But a simple and straightforward man studies great topics because he feels a want of the knowledge which they contain; and if he has ascertained an apparent solution of any difficulty, he is anxious to impart it to others. He goes straight to the real doubts and fundamental discrepancies; to those on which it is easy to excite odium, and difficult to give satisfaction; he leaves to others the amusing skirmishing and superficial literature accessory to such studies. Thus there is nothing light in Butler; all is grave, serious and essential; nothing else would be characteristic of him.

The Sermons of Butler are primarily intended as an answer to that recurring topic of ethical discussion, the Utilitarian Philosophy. He is occasionally spoken of by enthusiastic disciples as having uprooted this for ever. But this is hardly so. The selfish system still lives and flourishes. Nor must any writer on the fundamental differences of human opinion propose to himself such an aim. The source of the great heresies of belief lies in their congeniality to certain types of

character frequent in the world, and liable to be reproduced by inevitable and recurring circumstances. We do not mean that the variations of creeds are the native and essential variances of the minds which believe them, for this would render truth a matter of personal character, and make general discussion impossible. We believe that all minds are originally so constituted as to be able to acquire right opinions on all subjects of the first importance to them; but, nevertheless, that the native bent of their character instinctively inclines them to particular views; that one man is naturally prone to one error, and another to its opposite; that this is increased by circumstances, and becomes for practical purposes invincible, unless it be met on the part of every man by early and vigorous resistance. The Epicurean philosophy is an example of these recurring and primary errors, inasmuch as it is congenial to clear, vigorous and hasty minds, which have no great depth of feeling, and no searching introspection of thought, which prefer a ready solution to an accurate, an easy to an elaborate, a simple to a profound. Draw a slight worldliness—and the events of life will draw it—over such a mind, and you have the best Epicurean. There is a use, however, in discussing topics like these. Nothing would be more perverse than to abstain from proving certain truths, because some men were naturally prone to the opposite errors; rather, on the contrary, should we din them into the ears, and thrust them upon the attention, of mankind; go out into the highways and hedges, and leave as few as possible for invincible ignorance to mislead or to excuse. It is much in every generation to state the ancient truth in the manner which that generation requires; to state the old answer to the old difficulty; to transmit, if not discover; convince, if not invent; to translate into the language of the living, the truths first discovered by the dead. This defence, though suggested by the subject, is not, however, required by Butler. He may claim the higher praise of having explained his subject in a manner essentially more satisfactory than his predecessors.

We are not concerned to follow Butler into the entire range of this ancient and well-discussed topic. We are only

called on to make, and we shall only make, two or three remarks on the position which he occupies with respect to it. His grand merit was the simple but important one of having given a less complex and more graphic description of the facts of human consciousness than any one had done before. Before his time the Utilitarians had the advantage of appearing to be the only people who talked about real life and human transactions. The doctrines avowed by their opponents were cloudy, lofty, and impalpable. Platonic philosophy in its simple form is utterly inexplicable to the English mind. A plain man will not soon succeed in making anything of an archetypal idea. If an ordinary sensible Englishman takes up even such a book as Cudworth's *Immutable Morality*, it is nearly inevitable that he should put it down as mystical fancy. True as a considerable portion of the conclusions of that treatise are or may be, nevertheless the truth is commonly so put as to puzzle an Englishman, and the error so as particularly to offend him. We may open at random. "Wherefore," says Cudworth, "the result of all that we have hitherto said is this, that the intelligible natures and essences of things are neither arbitrary nor fantastical, that is, neither alterable by any will or opinion; and therefore everything is necessarily and immutably to science and knowledge what it is, whether absolutely, or relatively to all minds and intellects in the world. So that if moral good and evil, just and unjust, signify any reality, either absolute or relative, in the things so denominated, as they must have some certain natures, which are the actions or souls of men, they are neither alterable by will or opinion. Upon which ground that wise philosopher, Plato, in his *Minos*, determined that *Νόμος*, a law, is not *δόγμα πόλεως*, any arbitrary decree of a city or supreme governors; because there may be unjust decrees, which, therefore, are no laws, but the *invention of that which* is, or what is absolutely or immutably just in its own nature; though it be very true also that the arbitrary constitutions of those that have the lawful authority of commanding when they are not materially unjust, are laws also in a secondary sense, by virtue of that natural and immutable justice or law that requires political order to be observed.

But I have not taken all this pains only to confute scepticism or fantasticism, or merely to defend or corroborate our argument for the immutable nature of the just and unjust; but also for some other weighty purposes that are very much conducing to the business we have in hand. And first of all, that the soul is not a mere *tabula rasa*, a naked and passive thing, which has no innate furniture or activity of its own, nor anything at all in it but what was impressed on it from without; for if it were so, then there could not possibly be any such thing as moral good and evil, just and unjust, forasmuch as these differences do not arise merely from outward objects or from the impresses which they made upon us by sense, there being no such thing in them, in which sense it is truly affirmed by the author of the *Leviathan*:[1] 'That there is no common rule of good and evil to be taken from the nature of the objects themselves,' that is, either considered absolutely in themselves, or relatively to external sense only, but according to some other interior analogy which things have to a certain inward determination in the soul itself from whence the foundation of all this difference must needs arise, as I shall show afterwards; not that the anticipations of morality spring merely from intellectual forms and notional ideas of the mind or from certain rules or propositions printed on the 'soul as on a book,' but from some other more inward and vital principle in intellectual beings, as such, whereby they have a natural determination in them to do certain things, and to avoid others, which could not be, if they were mere naked, passive things."

It is instructive to compare Butler's way of stating a doctrine substantially similar :—

"Mankind has various instincts and principles of action, as brute creatures have; some leading most directly and immediately to the good of the community, and some most directly to private good.

"Man has several which brutes have not; particularly reflection or conscience, an approbation of some principles or actions, and disapprobation of others.

"Brutes obey their instincts or principles of action, according to certain rules; suppose the constitution of their body, and the objects around them.

[1] Part i., chap. vi., p. 24.

"The generality of mankind also obey their instincts and principles, all of them; those propensions we call good, as well as the bad, according to the same rules, namely, the constitution of their body, and the external circumstances which they are in.

"Brutes in acting according to the rules before mentioned, their bodily constitution and circumstances, act suitably to their whole nature.

"Mankind also, in acting thus, would act suitably to their whole nature, if no more were to be said of man's nature than what has been now said; if that, as it is a true, were also a complete, adequate account of our nature.

"But that is not a complete account of man's nature. Somewhat further must be brought in to give us an adequate notion of it, namely, that one of those principles of action, conscience, or reflection, compared with the rest, as they all stand together in the nature of man, plainly bears upon it marks of authority over all the rest, and claims the absolute direction of them all, to allow or forbid their gratification; a disapprobation of reflection being in itself a principle manifestly superior to a mere propension. And the conclusion is, that to allow no more to this superior principle or part of our nature, than to other parts; to let it govern and guide only occasionally in common with the rest, as its turn happens to come, from the temper and circumstances one happens to be in,—this is not to act conformably to the constitution of man. Neither can any human creature be said to act conformably to his constitution of nature, unless he allows to that superior principle the absolute authority which is due to it. And this conclusion is abundantly confirmed from hence, that one may determine what course of action the economy of man's nature requires, without so much as knowing in what degrees of *strength* the several principles prevail, or which of them have actually the greatest influence.

"The practical reason of insisting so much upon this natural authority of the principle of reflection or conscience is, that it seems in a great measure overlooked by many, who are by no means the worst sort of men. It is thought sufficient to abstain from gross wickedness, and to be humane and kind to such as happen to come in their way. Whereas, in reality, the very constitution of our nature requires that we bring our whole conduct before this superior faculty; wait its determination; enforce upon ourselves its authority; and make it the business of our lives, as it is absolutely the whole business of a moral agent, to conform ourselves to it. This is the true meaning of that ancient precept, *Reverence thyself*." [1]

We do not mean that Cudworth's style is not as good, or better, than the style of Butler; but that the language and illustrations of the latter belong to the same world as that we live in, have a relation to practice, and recall senti-

[1] Preface to Sermons.

ments we remember to have felt and sensations which are familiar to us, while those of Cudworth, on the contrary, seem difficult, and are strange in the ears of the common people.

We do not need to go more deeply into the discussion of Butler's doctrine, for it is familiar to our readers. If there is any incorrectness in the delineation which he has given of conscience, it is in the passages in which he speaks, or seems to speak, of it more as an animating or suggesting, than as a criticising or regulative faculty. The error of this representation has been repeatedly pointed out and illustrated in these pages.[1] It is probable, indeed, that Butler's attention has scarcely been directed with sufficient precision to this portion of the subject. It follows easily, from his favourite principles, that when two impulses—say benevolence and self-love—contend for mastery in the mind, and conscience pronounces that one is a higher and better motive of action than the other, the office of conscience is judicial, and not impulsive. Conscience gives its opinion, and the will obeys or disobeys at its pleasure ; the impelling spring of action is the selected impulse on which the will finally decides to act. At the same time, it must be admitted that there are cases when, for practical purposes, conscience is an impelling and goading faculty. We mean when it is opposed by indolence. There is a heavy lassitude of the will, which is certainly spurred, sometimes effectually, and sometimes in vain, by our conscience. Possibly the correct language may be, that in such cases the desire of ease is opposed by the desire of doing our duty ; and that in this case also the office of conscience is simply to say, that the latter is higher than the former. To us it seems, however, if we may trust our consciousness on points of such exact nicety, that it is more graphically true to speak of the sluggishness of the will being goaded and stimulated by the activity of conscience. There is a native inertness in the voluntary faculty which will not come forth unless great occasion is shown it. At any rate, something like this was perhaps the meaning of Butler, and he, no doubt, would

[1] *The Prospective Review.*

have included in the term conscience the desire to do our duty as such, and because it is such.

Butler has been claimed by Mr. Austin, in his *Province of Jurisprudence* (and sometimes since by other writers), as a supporter of the compound Utilitarian scheme, as it has been called, which regards the promotion of general happiness as the single inherent characteristic of virtuous actions, and considers the conscience as a special instinct for directing men in determining what actions are for the general interest and what are not. This theory is, of course, distinct from the common Epicurean scheme, which either denies, like Bentham, the fact of a conscience *in limine*, or, like Mill, professes to explain it away as an effect of illusion and association. The "Composite theory," on the other hand, distinctly admits the existence and obligatory authority of conscience, but regards it as a ready, expeditious, and, so to say, telegraphic mode of arriving at results which could otherwise be reached only by toilsome and dubious discussions of general utility. In our judgment, however, the writings of Butler hardly warrant an authoritative ascription to him of this philosophy. He doubtless held that the promotion of general happiness, taking all time and all the world into a complete account, is *one* characteristic and ascertainable property of virtue; but there is nothing to show that he thought it was the only one. On the contrary, we think we could show, with some plausibility, from several passages, that, in his judgment, virtuous actions had besides several essential and appropriate qualities. He was, at all events, the last man to deny that they might have; and his whole reasoning on the subject of moral probation seems to imply that, inasmuch as such a state is, according to every appearance, not at all the readiest or surest means of promoting satisfaction or enjoyment, it cannot have been selected for the cultivation of either satisfaction or enjoyment. It is one thing to hold that, the nature of man being what it is, a virtuous life is the happiest as well as best; and another, that such a life is the best because it is the happiest, and that the nature of man was created in the manner it is in order to produce

such happiness. The first is, of course, the doctrine of Butler; the second there does not seem any certain ground for imputing to him.

The religious side of morals is rather indicated and implied, than elaborated or worked out by Butler. Yet, as we formerly said, a constant reference to the "presages of conscience" pervades his writings. Although he has nowhere drawn out the course of reasoning fully, or step by step, it is certain that he relied on the moral evidence for a moral Providence; not, indeed, with foolhardy assurance, but with the cautious confidence which was habitual to him. The ideas which are implied in the term justice—the connection between virtue and reward—sin and punishment—a sacred law and holy Ruler, were plainly the trains of reflection most commonly present to his mind.

Persons who give credence to an intuitive conscience are so often taunted with the variations and mutability of human nature, that it is worth noticing how complete is the coincidence, in essential points of feeling, between minds so different as Butler, Kant, and Plato. We can scarcely imagine among thoughtful men a greater diversity of times and characters. The great Athenian in his flowing robes daily conversing in captious Athens—the quiet rector wandering in Durham coalfields—the smoking professor in ungainly Königsberg, would, if the contrast were not too great for art, form a trio worthy of a picture. The whole series of truths and reasonings which we have called the supernatural religion, or that of conscience, is, however, as familiar to one as to the other, and is the most important, if not the most conspicuous, feature in the doctrinal teaching of all three. The very great differences of nomenclature and statement, the entire contrast in the style of expression, do but heighten the wonder of the essential and interior correspondence. The doctrine has certainly shown its capability of co-existing with several forms of civilisation; and at least the simplest explanation of its diffusion is by supposing that it has a real warrant in the nature and consciousness of man.

Such is the doctrine of the Sermons; the argument of the

Analogy is of a different and more complicated kind; and, from its refinement, requires to be stated with care and precaution. As the Sermons are in a great measure a reply to the caricaturists of Locke, the *Analogy* is, in reality, designed as a confutation of Shaftesbury and Bolingbroke. It was the object of those writers, as of others since, to disprove the authority of the Christian and Jewish revelation, by showing that they enjoined on man conduct forbidden by the law of Nature, and likewise imputed to the Deity actions of an evil tendency and degrading character. These writers are commonly, and perhaps best, met by a clear denial of the fact; by showing in detail, that Christianity is really open to no such objections, contains no such precepts, and imputes no such actions: the reply of Butler is much more refined and peculiar.

The argument has been thus expounded, and its supposed bearing explained by Professor Rogers in the notice of Butler, —the title of which we have ventured to affix to this Article:—

"Further; we cannot but think that the conclusiveness of Butler's work as against its true object, 'the Deist,' has often been underrated by many even of its genuine admirers. Thus, Dr. Chalmers, for instance, who gives such glowing proofs of his admiration of the work, and expatiates in a congenial spirit on its merits, affirms that 'those overrate the power of analogy who look to it for any very distinct or positive contribution to the Christian argument. To repel objections, in fact, is the great service which analogy has rendered to the cause of Revelation, and it is the *only service* which we seek for at its hands.' This, abstractedly, is true; but, *in fact*, considering the *position* of the bulk of the objectors, that they have been invincibly persuaded of the truth of theism, and that their objections to Christianity have been exclusively or chiefly of the kind dealt with in the *Analogy*, the work is much more than an *argumentum ad hominem*—it is not simply of negative value. To such *objectors* it logically establishes the truth of Christianity, or it forces them to recede from theism, which the bulk will not do. If a man says, 'I am invincibly persuaded of the truth of proposition A, but I cannot receive proposition B, because objections α, β, γ are opposed to it; if these were removed, my objections would cease'; then, if you can show that α, β, γ equally apply to the proposition A, his reception of which, he says, is based on invincible evidence, you do really compel such a man to believe that not only B *may* be true, but that it *is* true, unless he be willing (which few in the parallel case are) to abandon proposition A as well as B. This is pre-

cisely the condition in which the majority of Deists have ever been, if we may judge from their writings. It is usually the *a priori* assumption, that certain facts in the history of the Bible, or some portions of its doctrine, are unworthy of the Deity, and incompatible with his character or administration, that has chiefly excited the incredulity of the Deist; far more than any dissatisfaction with the positive evidence which substantiates the Divine origin of Christianity. Neutralise these objections by showing that they are *equally* applicable to what he declares he cannot relinquish—the doctrines of theism; and you show him, if he has a particle of logical sagacity, not only that Christianity may be true, but that it is so; and his only escape is by relapsing into atheism, or resting his opposition on other objections of a very feeble character in comparison, and which, probably, few would ever have been contented with alone; for, *apart* from those objections which Butler repels, the historical evidence for Christianity—the evidence on behalf of the integrity of its records and the honesty and sincerity of its founders—showing that they *could* not have constructed such a system if they *would*, and *would* not, supposing them impostors, if they *could*—is stronger than that for any fact in history.

"In consequence of this position of the argument, Butler's book, to large classes of objectors, though practically an *argumentum ad hominem*, not only proves Christianity *may* be true, but in all logical fairness proves it *is* so. This he himself, with his usual judgment, points out. He says: 'And objections which are equally applicable to both natural and revealed religion are, properly speaking, answered by its being shown that they are so, *provided the former be admitted to be true*'."

No one can deny the ingenuity of this line of reasoning, but we can only account for the great assent which it has received, by supposing that the goodness of the cause for which it is commonly brought forward has not unnaturally led to an undue approbation of the argument itself. From the amount of authority in its favour we feel some diffidence, but otherwise we should have said, without hesitation, that it was open to several objections.

In the first place, so far from its being probable that Revelation would have contained the same difficulties as Nature, we should have expected that it would explain those difficulties. The very term Supernatural Revelation implies that previously and by nature man is, to a great extent, in ignorance; that particularly he is unaware of some fact, or series of facts, which God deems it fit that he should know. The instinctive presumption certainly is, that those facts would be most important to us. No doubt it is possible that, for

incomprehensible reasons, a special revelation should be made of facts purely indifferent, of the date when London was founded, or the precise circumstances of the invasion by William the Conqueror. But this is in the highest degree improbable. What seems likely (and the whole argument is essentially one of likelihood), according to our mind, is that the Revelation which God would vouchsafe to us would be one affecting our daily life and welfare, would communicate truths either on the one hand conducing to our temporal happiness in the present world, or removing the many doubts and difficulties which surround the general plan of Providence, the entire universe, and our particular destiny. These are the two classes of truths on which we seem to require help, and it is in the first instance more probable that assistance would be given us on those points on which it is most required.

The argument of Butler, of course, relates to our religious difficulties. And it seems impossible to deny that this is the exact class of difficulty which it is most likely a revelation, if given, would explain. No one who reasons on this subject is likely to doubt that the natural faculties of man are more clearly adequate to our daily and temporal happiness, than to the explanation of the perplexities which have confounded men since the beginning of speculation—of which the mere statement is so vast—which relate to the scheme of the universe and the plan of God. This is the one principle on which the most extreme sceptics, and the most thorough advocates of revelation, meet and agree. The sceptic says, "Man is not born to resolve the mystery of the universe; but he must nevertheless attempt it, that he may keep within the limits of the knowable": which really means that he is to fold his hands and be quiet; to abstain from all religious inquiry; to confine himself to this life, and be industrious and practical within its limits. The advocate of revelation is for ever denying the competency of man's faculties to explain, or puzzle out, what in the large sense most concerns him. There are difficulties celestial, and difficulties terrestrial; but it is certainly more likely that God would interfere miraculously to explain the first than to remove the second.

Let us look at the argument more at length. The supposition and idea of a "miraculous revelation" rest on the ignorance of man. The scene of Nature is stretched out before him; it has rich imagery, and varied colours, and infinite extent; its powers move with a vast sweep; its results are executed with exact precision; it gladdens the eyes, and enriches the imagination; it tells us something of God—something important, yet not enough. For example, difficulties abound; poverty and sin, pain and sorrow, fear and anger, press on us with a heavy weight. On every side our knowledge is confined, and our means of enlarging it small. Of this the outer world takes no heed; Nature is "unfeeling"; her laws roll on; "beautiful and dumb," she passes forward and vouchsafes no sign. Indeed, she seems to hide, as one might fancy, the dark mysteries of life which seem to lie beneath; our feeble eyes strain to look forward, but her "painted veil" hangs over all, like an October mist upon the morning hills. Here, as it seems, revelation intervenes; God will break the spell that is upon us; will meet our need; will break, as it were, through the veil of Nature; He will show us of Himself. It is not likely, surely, that He will break the everlasting silence to no end; that, having begun to speak, He will tell us nothing; that He will leave the difficulties of life where He found them; that He will repeat them in His speech; that He will revive them in His word. It seems rather, as if His faintest disclosure, His least word, would shed abundant light on all doubts, would take the weight from our minds, would remove the gnawing anguish from our hearts. Surely, surely, if He speaks He will make an end of speaking, He will show us some good, He will destroy "the veil that is spread over all nations," and the "covering over all people"; He will not "darken counsel by words without knowledge".

To this line of argument we know of but one objection; it may be said, that, from the immensity of the universe in which man is, reasons may exist for communicating to him facts of which he cannot appreciate the importance, but a belief in which may nevertheless be most important to his ultimate welfare. Of this kind, according to some divines,

is the doctrine of the "Atonement". As they think, it is impossible to explain the mode in which the death of Christ conduces to the forgiveness of sin, or why a belief in it should be made, as they think it is, a necessary preliminary to such forgiveness. They consider that this is a revealed matter of fact; part of a system of things which is not known now, which would very likely be above our understanding if it were explained, which, at all events, is not explained. We reply, that the revelation of an inexplicable fact is possible, and that, if adequate evidence could be adduced in its favour, we might be bound to acquiesce in it; but that, on the other hand, such a revelation is extremely improbable: so far as we can see, there was no occasion for it; it helps in nothing, explains to us nothing; it enlarges our knowledge only thus far, that for some unknown reason we are bound to believe something from which certain effects follow in a manner which we cannot understand. Such a revelation is, as has been said, possible; but it is much more likely, *a priori*, that a revelation, if given, would be a revelation of facts suited to our comprehension, and throwing a light on the world in which we are.

The same remark is applicable to a revelation commanding rites and ceremonies which do not come home to the conscience as duties, and of which the reasons are not explained to us by the revelation itself. The Pharisaic code of "cups and washings" is an obvious instance. It is obviously most improbable that we should be ordered to do these things. The fact may be so; but the evidence of it should be overwhelming, and should be examined with almost suspicious and sceptical care. A revelation of a rule of life which approves itself to the heart, which awakens conscience, which seems to come from God, is the greatest conceivable aid to man, the greatest explanation of our most practical perplexities; a revelation of rites and ordinances is a revelation of new difficulties, telling us nothing of God, imposing an additional taskwork on ourselves.

We are to remember, that the *Analogy* is, as the Germans would speak, a "Kritik" of every possible revelation. The first principle of it rests on the inquiry, "What would it be likely that a revelation, if vouchsafed, would contain?" The

whole argument is one of preconception, presumption, and probability. It claims to establish a principle, which may be used in defence of any revelation, the Mahomedan as well as the Christian; according to it, as soon as you can show that a difficulty exists in Nature, you may immediately expect to find it in revelation. If carried out to its extreme logical development, it would come to this, that if a catalogue were constructed of all the inexplicable arrangements and difficulties of Nature, you might confidently anticipate that these very same difficulties in the same degree and in the same points would be found in revelation. Both being from the same Author, it is presumed that each would resemble the other. The principle, even to this length, is enunciated by Mr. Rogers; the difficulties of Nature are the α β γ of the extract: and he asserts, that if you can show that all of them exist in one system, you have every reason to expect *all* of them in the other. Yet, surely, what can be more monstrous than that a supernatural communication from God should simply enumerate all the difficulties of His natural government and not enlighten us as to any of them—should revive our perplexities without removing them—should not satisfy one doubt or one anxiety, but repeat and proclaim every fact which can give a basis to them both?

The case does not rest here. There is a second ground of objection to the argument of the *Analogy* on which we are inclined to lay nearly equal stress. As has been said, it is most likely that a revelation from God would explain at least a part of the religious difficulties of man; and, in matter of fact, all systems purporting to be revelations have in their respective degrees professed to do so. They all deal with what may be called the system of the universe—its moral plan and scheme; the destiny of man therein—the motives from which God created it—and the manner in which He directs it. Throughout the whole range of doctrines, from Mormonism up to Christianity, no one has ever gained any acceptance, has ever, perhaps, been sincerely put forward, which did not deal with this whole range of facts—which did not tell man, according to his view, whence he is, and whither he goes. Revela-

tions, as such, are communications concerning eternity. Now, it seems to us, that so far from its being likely, *a priori*, that a revelation of this sort would contain the same perplexing difficulties which cause so much evil in this world, in the same degree in which they exist here, it would be scarcely possible by any evidence, *a posteriori*, to establish the communication of such a system from the Divine Being. It seems clear on the surface of the subject that, the extent of the unknown world being so enormous in comparison with that which is known, this scene being so petty, and the plan of Providence so vast—earth being little, and space infinite—Time short, and Eternity long—a difficulty, which is of no moment in so contracted a sphere as this, becomes of infinite moment when extended to the sphere of the Almighty. From the smallness of the region which we see—the short time which we live—from the few things which we know—it may well be that there are points which perplex the feebleness of our understanding and puzzle the best feelings of our hearts. We see, as some one expresses it, the universe "not in plan but in section"; and we cannot expect to understand very much of it. But when our knowledge increases—when, by a revelation, that plan is unfolded to us—when God vouchsafes to communicate to us the system on which He acts, then it is rational to expect those difficulties would diminish—would gradually disappear as the light dawned upon us—would vanish finally when the dayspring arose in our hearts. If a difficulty of Nature be repeated in revelation, it would seem to show that it was not, as we had before supposed, a consequence of our short-sighted views and contracted knowledge, but a real inherent element in the scheme of the universe; not a petty shade on a petty globe, but a pervading inherent stain, extending over all things, destroying the beauty of the universe, impairing the perfectness of all creation. Take, as an instance, the extreme doctrine of Antinomian Calvinism—suppose that the eternal condition of man depended in no degree on his acts, or works, or upon himself in any form, but on an arbitrary act of selection by God, which chose some, independently of any antecedent fitness on their part, for eternal happiness, and consigns all others—irrespective of their

guilt or innocence—to eternal ruin. Nothing, of course, can be more shocking than such a doctrine when stated in simple language; and if it really were contained in any document that professes to be a revelation, we should be plainly justified in passing it by as a document which no evidence would prove to have been inspired by God. Yet the doctrine certainly does not want partial analogies in this world. The condition of men here does seem to be in a considerable measure the result not of what they do, or of what their characters are, but of the mere circumstances in which they are placed, over which they have no control, choice, or power. One man is born in a ditch, another in a palace; one with a gloomy and painful, another with a cheerful and happy mind; one to honour, another to dishonour. We invent words—fortune, luck, chance—to express in a subtle way the notion that some seem the favourites of circumstance, others the scapegoats. So far as it goes, this is a distinct "election" on the part of God of some to misery, of others to felicity, irrespective of their personal qualities. Accordingly, it may be argued, why should we not expect to find the same in the world of revelation, which is from the hand of the same Creator? But this will scarcely impose on any one. A certain indignation arises within us—Conscience uplifts her voice, and we reply, "It may well be that for a short time God may afflict His people without their own fault, but that He should do so for ever—that He should make no end of injustice—that He favours one without a reason, and condemns another without a fault—this, come what may, we will not believe—we would sooner cast ourselves at large on the waste of uncertainty;—pass on with your teaching, and ask God, if so be that He will pardon you for attributing such things to Him". We need not further enlarge on this.

Again—and in the practical conduct of the argument this is a very material consideration—all revelations impute *intentions* to God. Acts are done, observances enjoined, a providential plan pursued, for reasons which are explained. The cause of this is evident from our previous reasoning. As we have seen, all revelations profess to vindicate the ways of God

to man; and it is impossible to do so effectually without declaring to us at least some of His motives and designs. It is most important to observe, that no analogy from Nature can justify us in judging of these except by the standard of right or wrong which God has implanted within us. From external observation we learn almost nothing of God's intentions. The scheme is too large; the universe too unbounded. One phenomenon follows another; but, except in a few cases, and then very dubiously, we cannot tell which was created for which—which was the design—which the means—which the determining object—and which the subservient purpose. Even in the few cases in which we do impute such intentions, we do so because they seem to be in harmony with God's moral character; they are not strictly proved, they are mere conjectures; and we should reject at once any that might seem ethically unworthy. But the case is different with a revelation which, from its own nature, unfolds ends and instruments in their due measure and their actual subordination, which develops an orderly system, and communicates hidden motives and unforeseen designs. A recent writer, for example, thus defends certain apparent cruelties of the Old Testament by stating those of Nature: "God," he says, "sends His pestilence, and produces horrors on which imagination dare not dwell; horrors not only physical, but indirectly moral; often transforming man into something like the fiend so many say he can never become. He sends His famine, and thousands perish—men and women, and 'the child that knows not its right hand from its left'—in prolonged and frightful agonies. He opens the mouths of volcanoes and lakes; boils and fries the population of a whole city in torrents of burning lava, etc., etc." [1]—with much else to the same purpose. But this must not be adduced in extenuation of anything of which the reasons are narrated; on the contrary, these last must be judged of

[1] Professor Rogers's *Defence of the "Eclipse of Faith,"* p. 43. It is to be observed, we are not at all speaking of the facts of the Old Testament; we are but limiting the considerations on which the above writer has rested its defence. These refined reasonings but weaken the case they are brought to support. "I did not know," said George III., "that the Bible needed an apology."

by the moral faculties which are among God's highest gifts. To the infliction of pain, with an express view to what conscience tells us to be an unworthy object, outward Nature does and can afford no parallel. She has no avowals; it is but from conjecture that we conceive her motives; her laws pass forward; the crush of her forces is upon us; like a child in a railway, we know not anything. The incomprehensible has no analogy to the explained; the mysterious none to that on which the oracle has intelligibly spoken.

Lastly, for a similar reason it is impossible that there should be any analogy in Nature for a precept from God opposed to the law of conscience. External Nature gives no precept; our knowledge of our duty comes from within; the physical world is subordinate to our inward teaching; it is silent on points of morality. On the other hand, a revelation, supposing satisfactory means of attesting it were found, might possibly contain such a precept. It is very painful to put such suppositions before the mind; but the pain is inherent in the nature of the subject. The topic of the difficulties and perplexities of man cannot, by any artifice of rhetoric, be rendered pleasing. In such a case, supposing there to be no difficulty of evidence in the case, our duty might be to obey God even against conscience, from that assurance of His essential perfection which is the most certain attestation of conscience. But the existence of such a difficulty is in the highest degree improbable; it is one which ought only to be admitted on the completest proof and after the most rigid straining of evidence; it is, from the nature of the case, without a parallel in the common and unrevealed world.

To all these considerable objections, we believe the argument of the *Analogy* is properly subject. We think in general that, according to every reasonable presumption, a revelation would not repeat the same difficulties as are to be found in Nature, but would remove and explain some of them; that difficulties, which are of small importance in the natural world, on account of the smallness of its sphere and the brevity of its duration, become of insuperable magnitude when extended to infinity and eternity, when alleged to be co-exten-

sive with the universe, and to be inherent in its scheme and structure; and that—what is of less universal scope, but still of essential importance—Nature offers no analogy to the ascription by any professed revelation of an unworthy intention to God, or the inculcation through it of an immoral precept on man.

It is impossible, then, by any such argument as this, to remove from moral criticism the entire contents of any revelation. According to the more natural view, the unimpeachable morality of those contents is a most essential part of the evidence on which our belief must rest; and this seems to remain so, notwithstanding these refinements. On the other hand, we do not contend that the reasoning of the *Analogy* is wholly worthless. If Butler's[1] argument had only been adduced to this extent; if it had only been argued that, though a revelation might be expected to explain some difficulties, it could not be expected to explain all; that a certain number would, from our ignorance and unworthiness, still remain; and these residuary difficulties would be of the same order, class, and kind, to which we were accustomed; that the style of Providence, if one may so say, would be the same in the newly-communicated phenomena as we had observed it to be in those we were familiar with before,—there could be little question of the soundness of the principle. No one would expect that there would be new difficulties introduced by a revelation; what difficulties were found in it we should expect to be identical with those observed before in Nature; or, at least, to be similar to them, and likely to be explained in the same way by a more adequate knowledge of God's purposes. We should particularly expect the difficulties of revelation to be *like* those of Nature, limited in time and range, not extending to the entire scheme of Providence, not diffused through infinity and eternity, not imputing evil intentions to God, not inculcating immoral precepts on man. We can hardly be said

[1] We doubt, however, if Butler would at all have accepted Mr. Rogers's statement of his view, though it is perhaps the most common interpretation of him. Probably, he really meant no more than what we contend for, though his language is not always so limited in terms.

to *expect* to find difficulties in revelation at all; the utmost that seems probable, *a priori*, is, that it should leave unnoticed some of those of Nature. Nevertheless, there is no violent, no overwhelming improbability in the fact of some perplexing points being contained in a communication from God; we are so weak, that it may be we cannot entirely understand the smallest intimation from the Infinite Being. And if difficulties are found there, they are, of course, less perplexing, when resembling those which we knew before, than if they be wholly distinct and new in kind. But this principle is, on the face of it, very different from the admission of an antecedent probability, that all the difficulties discoverable in Nature would be daguerreotyped in a revelation.

The difference is seen very clearly by looking at the argument which Butler's reasoning is intended to confute. Suppose a professed revelation to be laid before a person who was before unacquainted with it, and that he finds in it several perplexing points. According to Butler's principle, or what is supposed by Mr. Rogers to be Butler's principle, it is enough to reply: You have those same difficulties in Nature before; you cannot consistently object to them now; they have not prevented your ascribing Nature to a Divine Author; they should not prevent you from ascribing to Him this revelation. Nature is so full of difficulties, that almost every doctrine that has ever been attributed to revelation may be provided with a parallel more or less apt. Consequently, it would be almost needless to criticise the contents of any alleged revelation, when we may be met so easily by such a reply. No careful reasoner would attempt that criticism. According to the doctrine which we have reiterated, we should deem it a difficulty that these perplexing points should be found in a revelation; but that difficulty would not amount to much, would not counterbalance strong evidence, if it could be shown that the system claiming to be revealed, although leaving these points unexplained, threw ample light on others; that what gave cause for perplexity was quite subordinate to what removed perplexity; that no immoral actions were enjoined on man; no unworthy motives imputed to God; no vice attributed to the whole

scheme and plan of the Creator. There would therefore remain the largest scope for internal criticism on all systems claiming to be messages from God; on the very face they must seem worthy of Him: in their very essence they must seem good.

This is plainly the obvious view. The natural opinion certainly is that the moral and religious faculties would be those on which we should primarily depend, in judging of an alleged communication from heaven; in deciding whether it have a valid claim to that character or no. These faculties are those which, antecedently to revelation, determine our belief in all other moral and religious questions, and it is therefore natural to look to them as the best judges of the authenticity of an alleged revelation. Many divines, however, struggle to deny this. Thus, in the memoir of Butler we are now reviewing, Mr. Rogers observes,—

"The immortal *Analogy* has probably done more to silence the objections of infidelity than any other ever written from the earliest 'apologies' downwards. It not only most critically met the spirit of unbelief in the author's own day, but is equally adapted to meet that which *chiefly* prevails in all time. In every age, some of the principal, perhaps *the* principal, objections to the Christian Revelation have been those which men's *preconceptions* of the Divine character and administration—of what God *must* be, and of what God *must* do—have suggested against certain facts in the sacred history, or certain doctrines it reveals. To show the objector, then (supposing him to be a theist, as nine-tenths of all such objectors have been), that the very same or similar difficulties are found in the structure of the universe and the Divine administration of it, is to wrest every *such* weapon completely from his hands, if he be a fair reasoner and remain a theist at all. He is bound, by strict logical obligation, either to show that the parallel difficulties do *not* exist, or to show how he can solve them, while he *cannot* solve those of the Bible. In default of doing either of these things, he ought either to renounce all *such* objections to Christianity, or abandon theism altogether. It is true, therefore, that though Butler leaves the alternative of atheism open, he hardly leaves any other alternative to nine-tenths of the theists who have objected to Christianity."

And there is a perpetual reiteration in the *Eclipse of Faith* [1] of the same reasoning. In fact, so far as the latter work has

[1] *The Eclipse of Faith; or a visit to a religious sceptic.* By Henry Rogers. London, 1852.

a distinct principle, this argument may be said to be that principle. The answer is, that the proof of all "revelation" itself rests on a "preconception" respecting the Divine character, and that, if we assume the truth of that one "preconception," we must not reject any others which may be found to have the same evidence. We refer, of course, to the assumption of God's veracity; which can only be proved by arguments that, if admitted, would likewise justify our attributing to Him all other perfect virtues. It is evident that a doubt as to this attribute is not only impious in itself, but quite destructive of all confidence in any communication which may be received from Him. And yet, on what evidence does its acceptance rest? It cannot be said to be demonstrated by what scientific men call "natural theology". Competent and careful persons examine the material world, the structure of animals and plants, the courses of the planets, the muscles of man, and they find there a great preponderance of benevolence. They show, with great labour and great merit, that the Being who arranged this universe is, on the whole, a benevolent Being; but does it follow that He will tell the truth? "In crossing a heath," says Paley, "suppose I pitched my foot against a stone, and were asked how the stone came to be there, I might possibly answer that, for anything I knew to the contrary, it had lain there for ever; nor would it, perhaps, be very easy to show the absurdity of this answer: but, suppose I had found a *watch* on the ground, and it should be inquired how the watch came to be in that place, I should hardly think of the answer I had before given, that, for anything I knew, it had been always there." And he shows, with his usual power, that this watch was, in all likelihood, made by a watchmaker. There is nothing cleverer, perhaps, in argumentative writing, than the way in which that argument is stated and pointed. But what evidence is there that the watchmaker was *veracious?* The amplest examination of the most refined designs, the minutest scrutiny of the most complex contrivances, do not go one hair's breadth to establish any such conclusion. Nor can it be shown that the virtue of veracity is identical with, or consequent on, the virtue of simple benevolence. We know well in

common life that there are such things as pleasing falsehoods, and that such things exist as disagreeable truths. A person (what we ordinarily call a good-natured person) whose only motive is simple benevolence, will constantly assert the first and deny the second. In its application to religion this tendency cannot be illustrated without suppositions which it is painful even to make; but yet they must be made for a moment, or the necessary argument must be left incomplete. Suppose, what is doubtless true, that the belief in a "future state," even if false, contributes to the temporal happiness of man in this world; that it does more to enlarge his hopes, stimulate his imagination, and alleviate his sorrows, than any one other consideration; that it contributes to the order of society and the progress of civilisation; that it is, as some one says, "the last restraint of the powerful, and the last hope of the wretched". Indisputably, a Being whose only motive was benevolence, who admitted no higher consideration, who looked steadily and solely to our mere happiness, would endeavour to instil that belief although it were quite untrue, would not think that *that* had anything to do with the question, would not hesitate to make a false revelation to confirm men in a belief so pleasant, so advantageous, so consolatory. Perhaps this supposition drives the argument home. We see that it is necessary for us to admit a "preconception" as to the character of God before we can even begin to prove the truth of a revelation; that we *must* reason of "what God *must* be and God *must* do," before we show that there is even a presumption in favour of any facts, or any doctrines, which are revealed in the "sacred history".

We have hinted, in an earlier part of this essay, that this doctrine of God's veracity seems to us to rest on the general assumption of the existence of a "perfect" Being, who rules and controls all things. It is, perhaps, the Divine attribute of which it is most difficult to find a trace in Nature. Of His omnipotence, justice, benevolence, we cannot, indeed, find absolute proof; for we believe that those attributes are infinite, and we can only prove them strictly with respect to the finite and very circumscribed world which we see and know. Yet,

at the same time, we discern indications and strong probabilities, that the Ruler of the world possesses these attributes; we can hardly be said to be able to do this with His veracity. The speechlessness of Nature, if we may again so speak, deprives us of any such evidence. All Theism is of the nature of faith. We can never *prove* from experience any being to be infinite, for our experience itself is essentially small and finite. We can often, however, as in the instance of the attributes of God above enumerated, and of others which might be added, establish by observation that the qualities in question exist in a certain degree, and we have only to rely on the principle of faith for our belief that these qualities exist in a perfect and supreme degree. In the case of the Divine veracity, it should seem that we believe it to exist in a perfect and infinite degree, without, from the peculiarity of our circumstances, being able to fortify it by any test or trial from experience.

Present controversies show that there should be a distinct understanding as to this matter. Such writers as the author of the *Eclipse of Faith* perpetually strive to justify what they think the difficulties of revelation, by insinuating—we might say inculcating—a scepticism as to the religious faculties and conscience of man. These faculties are at one time said to be "depraved"; once they were trustworthy, but man is fallen from that high estate; he can only now believe what is announced to him externally. But how can we then rely on those "depraved" faculties for our belief in the truthfulness of the Being who announces these things? At another time all the horrid superstitions, all the immoral rites, all the wretched aberrations of savage and licentious nations, are enumerated, displayed, inculcated, in order to convince us that these faculties give no certain information. We will not quote the passages. We do not like to read hard attacks even on the worst side of human nature; we cannot, like some, gloat upon such details. The argument is plain without any painful accuracy. How can you believe in the "intuition" of the Divine justice, when the Hindoo says this? How in that of His holiness, when the Papuan accepts that impurity? But this is no defence for any revelation. The writers who exult in such errors

because they think they can use them in their logic, are really cutting away the substratum of evidentiary argument from under them. The veracity of God has not been accepted by all nations any more than His justice. In many times and countries He has been thought to inspire falsehoods, to put a "lying spirit" in the mouths of men, to deceive them to their destruction. Agamemnon's dream is but the type of a whole class of legends imputing untrue revelations to the gods. If we liked such work, we might prove, perhaps, that there is no man on the earth whose ancestors have not believed the like. And what then? Why, we can only answer that, debased, depraved, imperfect as they may be, these faculties are our all. It is on them that we depend for life, and breath, and all things. We must believe our heart and conscience, or we shall believe nothing. We *must* believe that God cannot lie, or we must renounce all that our highest and innermost nature most cleaves to; but if we go so far, we must go further—we cannot believe in God's veracity and deny the intuition of His justice—we know that He is pure on the same ground that we know that He is true. If an alleged revelation contradict this justice or this purity, we must at once deny that it can have proceeded from Him.

Even admitting, as we think it must be admitted, that Butler did not firmly hold the principle which Mr. Rogers and others ascribe to him, some may find a difficulty in so great a thinker having even a tendency towards that tenet. On examination, however, the very error seems characteristic of him.

A mind such as Butler's was in a previous page described to be, is very apt to be prone to over-refinement. A thinker of what was there called the picturesque order has a vision, a picture of the natural view of the subject. Those certainties and conclusions, those doubts and difficulties, which occur on the surface, strike him at once; he sees with his mind's eye some conspicuous instance in which all such certainties are realised, and by which all such doubts are suggested. Some great typical fact remains delineated before his mind, and is a perpetual answer to all hypotheses which strive to be oversubtle. But an unimaginative thinker has no such assistance;

he has no pictures or instances in his mind; he works by a process like an accountant, and like an accountant he is dependent on the correctness with which he works. He begins with a principle and reasons from it; and if any error have crept into the deduction or into the principle, he has not any means of detecting it. His mind does not yield, as with more fertile fancies, a stock of instances on which to verify his elaborate conclusions. Accordingly he is apt to say he has explained a difficulty, when in reality he has but refined it away.

Again, there is likewise a deeper sense in which the argument of the *Analogy* is, even in its least valuable portions, characteristic of Butler. On topics so peculiar, the minds most likely to hold right opinions are exactly those most likely to advance wrong arguments in support of them. The opinions themselves are suggested and supported by deep and strong feelings, which it is painful to analyse, and not easy to describe. The real and decisive arguments for those opinions are little save a rational analysis and acute delineation of those feelings. It will necessarily follow that the mind most prone to delineate and analyse that part of itself will be most likely to succeed in the argumentative exposition of these topics; and this is not likely to be the mind which feels those emotions with the greatest intensity. The very keenness of these feelings makes them painful to touch; their depth, difficult to find: constancy, too, is liable to disguise them. The mind which always feels them will, so to speak, be less conscious of them than one which is only visited by them at long and rare intervals. Those who know a place or a person best are not those most likely to describe them best; their knowledge is so familiar that they cannot bring it out in words. A deep, steady under-current of strong feeling is precisely what affects men's highest opinions most, and exactly what prevents men from being able adequately to describe them. In the absence of the delineative faculty, without the power to state their true reasons, minds of this deep and steadfast class are apt to put up with reasons which lie on the surface. They are caught by an appearance of fairness, affect a dry and intellectual tone,

endeavour to establish their conclusions without the premises which are necessary,—without mention of the grounds on which, in their own minds, they really rest. The very heartfelt confidence of Butler in Christianity was perhaps the cause of his seeming in part to support it with considerations which appear to be erroneous.

It seems odd to say, and yet it is true, that the power of the *Analogy* is in its rhetoric. The ancient writers on that art made a distinction between the modes of persuasion which lay in the illustrative and argumentative efficacy of what was said, and a yet more subtle kind which seemed to reside in the manner and disposition of the speaker himself. In the first class, as has been before remarked, no writer of equal eminence is so defective as Butler; his thoughts, if you take each one singly, seem to lose a good deal from the feeble and hesitating manner in which they are stated. And yet, if you read any considerable portion of his writings, you become sensible of a strong disinclination to disagree with him. A strong anxiety first to find the truth, and next to impart it—an evident wish not to push arguments too far—a clear desire not to convince men except by reasonable arguments of true opinions, characterises every feeble word and halting sentence. Nothing is laid down to dazzle or arouse. It is assumed that the reader wants to know what is true, as much as the writer does to tell it. Very possibly this may not be the highest species of religious author. The vehement temperament, the bold assertion, the ecstatic energy of men like St. Augustine or St. Paul, burn, so to speak, into the minds and memories of men, and remain there at once and for ever. Such men excel in the broad statement of great truths which flash at once with vivid evidence on the minds which receive them. The very words seem to glow with life; and even the sceptical reader is half awakened by them to a kindred and similar warmth. Such are the men who move the creeds of mankind, and stamp a likeness of themselves on ages that succeed them. But there is likewise room for a quieter class, who partially state arguments, elaborate theories, appreciate difficulties, solve doubts; who do not expect to gain a hearing from the many—who do

not cry in the streets or lift their voice from the hill of Mars —who address quiet and lonely thinkers like themselves, and are well satisfied if a single sentence in all their writings remove one doubt from the mind of any man. Of these was Butler. *Requiescat in pace*, for it was peace that he loved.

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